

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE -

11.17.2024

PSALM 119:33-40

I. INTRODUCTION

Psalm 119:33-40

He

33 Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes;

and I will keep it to the end.

34 Give me understanding, that I may keep your law

and observe it with my whole heart.

35 Lead me in the path of your commandments,

for I delight in it.

36 Incline my heart to your testimonies,

and not to selfish gain!

37 Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things;

and give me life in your ways.

38 Confirm to your servant your promise,

that you may be feared.

39 Turn away the reproach that I dread,

for your rules are good.

40 Behold, I long for your precepts;

in your righteousness give me life!

- In the previous stanza, the psalmist seems to be expressing a time he went through filled with sorrow and lament (v28).
- He is driven to dependent prayer, he is in need of God's life-giving Word, to be strengthened and for God to do a work in his heart.
- The psalmist deeply loves the Word of God and he deeply loves the God of the Word.

- But he knows that he is dependent on God to help him to keep and obey God's Word.
- As we saw last time, the resolutions he makes exceed his ability to complete what he has resolved to do, he needs divine enablement.
- Charles Spurgeon called this stanza, "a honeycomb of prayers."
- It gives language to prayer for everyone who desires to live a life pleasing to the Lord, and to enter into the blessedness of a life shaped, informed, and directed by God's Word.

II. PRAY FOR INSTRUCTION

- In our passage, the heart is mentioned twice.
 - Heart from the perspective of the Hebrew Scripture is not about our feelings and emotions.
 - The heart in Scripture is the command center of the human life. It includes your emotions and feelings but also your thoughts, the understanding, and the will. It is from the heart that we make choices motivated by our desires.
 - We are instructed to guard our heart.
 - Proverbs 4:32 Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.
 - Apart from Christ, our hearts are sick and corrupted.
 - Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?
 - We need a fundamental change at the very core of our being, in our heart, and that is by God's grace what we receive in Christ.
 - When we are made alive in him, he renews our heart, he quickens us by the Spirit, our heart now pulsates with new affections and desires to live in a manner that is pleasing to God.
 - That's the promise that Ezekiel expressed prophetically as a new heart and new spirit that God will put within his people. A heart of flesh that was softened and the indwelling Spirit who would cause us to obey God (Ezekiel 36:26-27).
 - Jeremiah declared that God would make a new covenant with his people and that he would write his commands on their heart (Jeremiah 31:33).
 - We need God's Word to continue sanctifying and growing us in knowledge of and love for the Lord.
- The psalmist prays for instruction.
 - V1 Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes;
 - He's asking the Lord to disciple him.
 - Ten times in this psalm he prays this.
 - He wants the Lord to write his Word on his heart so that it guides his thinking, directs his will, shapes his affections, and pilots the course of his life.
 - He's not asking to be taught so that he can merely fill his head with knowledge about God's statutes, precepts, law, rules, testimonies, and commandments.
 - He wants to know also the "way of your statutes."
 - He wants to know the meaning, the objective, the direction, to be guided by them, to make them the habit and practice of his life.
 - In v35 he prays something similar, "Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it.
 - This is the posture of a learner and follower.
- Are you teachable? Are you a follower of Jesus Christ? Do you have a desire to be disciplined and taught by the Lord?

- Praise God that in Christ, we are given the indwelling Spirit who is our Teacher.
 - If you are in Christ, you will desire to be taught by God, and that very desire comes from God.
 - God has given us His Word to teach us and instruct us and to lead us in his way.
 - When you fill your heart with God's Word, when you set your minds on heavenly things, you begin to see the right way one should live to please God and not live for self.
 - Titus 2:11-14 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, 13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.
 - God's grace, which we can only come to know from God's Word, teaches us, trains us, to live self-controlled lives and to curb our sinful appetites. It teaches us to live upright lives, before God and others. It teaches us to live godly lives in this present age, to walk in holiness and purity.
 - God's Word teaches us how to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called (Eph 4:1).
 - God's Word instructs us on how to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord; fully pleasing to him (Col 1:10).
 - You won't know that apart from God's Word, apart from God teaching you.
- Like the psalmist, our desire in learning God's Word, reading it, studying it, memorizing it, meditating upon it, is not just comprehension, but application.
 - We want what we know to work its way out in how we walk.
 - The psalmist vows to keep the way of God's statutes to the end (33); to keep God's law and observe it with his whole heart (34)
 - Pray for God to teach you by His Spirit. Ask him to lead you in his paths. Ask God to make you a learner and a follower.

III. PRAY FOR ILLUMINATION

- The psalmist is prompted not only to pray for instruction but for illumination.
 - V34 Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart.
 - He wants understanding, he wants spiritual insight, he wants God's Word illuminated such that he can discern his way and live according to God's Word.
 - 1 Corinthians 2:14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.
 - Apart from the grace of God, we cannot understand spiritual truth.
- 1 Corinthians 2:12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.
 - We need the Spirit of God to open up the Word of God to us. We need the Spirit to help us understand the things given us by God.
 - 1 John 5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in

him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

- Only the Son of God, who is the Word made flesh, can give us understanding itself, to know him, to know truth itself.
- God's Word is wisdom. God's Word contains wisdom for life because it contains the words of the Giver of life.
- And we need spiritual illumination to understand the wisdom of God's Word and how to apply it to all of life. We need to understand how to walk in his ways.
- If you lack understanding in God's Word, pray for illumination.
- Ask him to open the eyes of your heart and give you understanding.
- The psalmist writes later in vv99-100: I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation. 100 I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts.
- God answered his prayer.
- We are made wiser by God's Word; seek to understand and apply it.
- The psalmist wanted to understand so that he could keep God's law and observe it with his whole heart.

IV. PRAY FOR INCLINATION

- The psalmist's prayer now turns to the obstacle in his desire to live wholeheartedly for God.
- He addresses in prayer two means of temptation in his life, as they are in ours—the heart and the eyes.
- For the psalmist, in order to live in God's ways according to God's Word, his eyes and heart need to be morally directed and that is something outside of his own power.
- We experience the same temptations in our life.
- 1689 LBCF 13:3, From this remaining corruption "arises a continual and irreconcilable war, with the desires of the flesh against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh."
- Peter writes that the passions of our flesh wage war against our soul (1 Peter 2:11).
- Paul described the warfare as "the desire to do what is right but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing." (Romans 7:18-20)
- The psalmist is prompted to pray for an inclined heart to do God's will.
- The verb "incline" means "to bend."
- He wants God to bend his heart away from selfish gain, that is away from greed and covetousness.
- He wants God to turn his eyes away from looking at worthless things.
- Our life will follow in the direction that our heart is bent.
- If we are inclined or bent one way, we will be turned from the other.
- If your heart is bent towards greed and selfish gain, you live your life in the pursuit and accumulation of stuff, your heart is bent away from God, it is not inclined toward him.
- Jesus said, Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:21)
- Jesus said, "You cannot serve God and money." (Matthew 6:24)
- If the eyes are turned toward worthless things, they are not turned to the Lord.
- "Worthless things" is a common OT expression of idols.
- Our eyes are always looking at stuff and our hearts are always making idols of stuff.

- An idol is anything you assign ultimate worth to.
- Covetousness and idolatry go hand in hand.
- Colossians 3:5 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.
- Psalm 101:2-3 I will ponder the way that is blameless. Oh when will you come to me? I will walk with integrity of heart within my house; 3 I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless.
- The psalmist wants his eyes and hearts inclined toward God and His Word.
- There are so many worthless things set before our eyes that seek to further bend our hearts away from the Lord.
- We must pray, *“Lord incline our hearts to you, turn our hearts away from desiring more stuff, dethrone the idols of our heart, turn our eyes away from the empty things of this fallen world.”*
- Our eyes must be redirected to the things of greater worth and value.
- We must set before our eyes and be captivated in our hearts by something that is far better, far more superior.
- Thomas Chalmers, 19th century Scottish theologian, wrote *The Expulsive Power of a New Affection*, *“There are two ways in which a practical moralist may attempt to displace from the human heart its love of the world - either by a demonstration of the world's vanity, so as that the heart shall be prevailed upon simply to withdraw its regards from an object that is not worthy of it; or, by setting forth another object, even God, as more worthy of its attachment, so as that the heart shall be prevailed upon not to resign an old affection, which shall have nothing to succeed it, but to exchange an old affection for a new one.”*
- We fight these worthless things and covetousness that we are tempted by with a superior joy, a greater affection for Christ.
- May our hearts be bent toward him and our eyes fixed upon him.

V. PRAY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Lastly, the psalmist prays for implementation of all of God’s promises.
- He prays that God would confirm his promises; that God would fulfill all that he has promised to do in his Word.
- He’s asking this in a way so that others can see those promises fulfilled in his life that would silence those who have spoken wrongly about him and this will produce in him a reverence for the Lord.
- There are two fears expressed in 38 and 39.
- There is a fear of the Lord that he wants to have.
- There is a fear of man that he dreads.
- It’s a terrible thing to live in the grip of the fear of man.
- That’s why he prays for God to keep his promises, which he always does, and he knows that will cause him to reverence God more and fear man less.
- Many Christians fear the words of man more than they fear the Lord.
- Ask yourself, whose words do you listen to and value most?
- Whose words do you assign greater importance to?
- When we saturate our lives with God’s Word, not only does our fear and reverence of the Lord increase, there is the corresponding benefit of not fearing man’s words or fearing what man can do to us.
- The psalmist prays for life in God’s ways, He wants God to spiritual revive and renew his spiritual life.
- This stanza furnishes us with the language of prayer.
- Pray for instruction, illumination, inclination and implementation.

- Let's come before the Lord in humble, dependent prayer, trusting that he will graciously and powerfully answer us and shape our heart and life to live according to His Word and His ways for his glory.

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?