

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE - 12.1.2024

PSALM 119:97-112 - GUIDING
YOUR WAY WITH GOD'S
WORD

I. INTRODUCTION

Psalm 119:97-112

Mem

97 Oh how I love your law!

It is my meditation all the day.

98 Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies,

for it is ever with me.

99 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.

101 I hold back my feet from every evil way,

in order to keep your word.

102 I do not turn aside from your rules,

for you have taught me.

103 How sweet are your words to my taste,

sweeter than honey to my mouth!

104 Through your precepts I get understanding;

therefore I hate every false way.

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105 Your word is a lamp to my feet

and a light to my path.

106 I have sworn an oath and confirmed it,

to keep your righteous rules.

107 I am severely afflicted;

give me life, O Lord, according to your word!

108 Accept my freewill offerings of praise, O Lord,

and teach me your rules.

109 I hold my life in my hand continually,

but I do not forget your law.

110 The wicked have laid a snare for me,

but I do not stray from your precepts.

111 Your testimonies are my heritage forever,

for they are the joy of my heart.

112 I incline my heart to perform your statutes

forever, to the end.

II. GOD'S WORD IMPARTS WISDOM

- Consider the opening line of this stanza, v97, "Oh how I love your law!"
- The psalm writer loves God's Word! He can't get enough of it.
- That statement might seem a little weird to you if you've never cultivated a taste for God's Word.
- Some people consider Bible reading boring, uninteresting, too challenging, too difficult to understand, so they've never trained their spiritual taste buds to consume God's Word in sufficient quantities to develop a taste for it.
- In v103, he expresses that God's word is sweeter to him than honey in his mouth.
- The taste of God's Word is better than the choicest, sweetest, and tastiest of delicacies.
- Sadly, many Christians haven't given their spiritual taste buds the opportunity to adequately taste and savor God's Word for enough time, to signal to their heart just how truly sweet and delectable God's Word is.

- Consider what would happen to you, how your life would be impacted, if you were to cultivate a taste for God's Word?
- If that were to happen, you would discover like the psalmist that God's Word will make you wise.
- God's Word imparts wisdom!
- In vv98-100, he makes three comparisons--his understanding and wisdom compared to that of his enemies, his teachers, and the aged (elders).
- You could translate it this way, that his wisdom and understanding is "more than" that of his enemies, his teachers, and his elders.
- Now it may come across to you like he's being arrogant and boastful.

- But upon close examination, we see that he's not boasting in himself, he's boasting in God's Word.
 - It is God's commandments, testimonies, precepts, that he's meditated on, that he has hidden in his heart, that he has committed to keeping that have given him this understanding and have made him wiser than all of them.
 - The all-wise God, whose knowledge is limitless, whose wisdom transcends everything seen or unseen, has taught him through His Word.
 - The point is that the measure of true wisdom is not man, or the collective so-called wisdom of the world, nor is the measure of true wisdom learned from many teachers or the life lessons of the elders.
 - The measure of true wisdom is God's Word and only those who have cultivated a taste for God's Word will have its wisdom imparted to them.
- The psalmist is not diminishing the role of teachers or the need to listen to the wisdom of the elders.
 - But there is a limit to the wisdom and understanding that they can impart.
 - This kind of wisdom falls short of imparting the kind of wisdom God's Word gives us that truly makes us wise for life and salvation and to know God.
- Whose wisdom do you seek out the most?
 - What voices do you listen to more than the voice of God in Scripture?
 - Whose wisdom have you been building your life upon and shaping your life around?
 - If you want to be truly wise you need to go to the fount of all wisdom.
 - Proverbs 4:7 For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;
 - God's Word alone can make one truly wise.
- Martin Luther, *"A simple layman armed with Scripture is to be believed above a pope or council without it."*
 - For Luther, the wisdom of God's Word was higher than the wisdom of even the mightiest pope who had forsaken Scripture.
 - True wisdom is found in God's Word.
 - Psalm 119:160 The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.
 - We must be people of the Word

III. GOD'S WORD PRODUCES CHANGE

- You can see clearly in this passage a metaphor that is employed throughout the whole of the psalm, that is of the way, or the path.
 - V101 and 102, he writes of holding back his feet from every evil way and not turning aside from God's rules.
 - Because of His love for God's Word, the wisdom God's Word has imparted to him, and the wisdom he has gained from obedience to God's Word, he doesn't go off the path.
 - He holds back his feet from turning off the well-worn path of righteousness.
- Much like the second stanza of the psalm, we're seeing here the fruit of sanctification in the life of a believer.
 - V101, He wants to keep God's Word, he wants to obey God's Word so he must do what is right, he must restrain himself from every evil way.
 - He's looking forward to a life lived in accordance with God's Word.
 - V102, he says that his obedience thus far in life and the reason he does not turn aside from God's Word, is because God has taught him how

to walk in his way.

- He' looking back to God's gracious work in his life to teach him.
- That is a picture of our sanctification. Our active pursuit of living a holy life, obeying God's Word and the reality of God's gracious work that has happened in us through Christ.

- God's word produces change in us but only when we do what his word tells us to do.
- The reason the psalmist loves God's Word, the reason He can commend it as the way of true wisdom, is because of what the word has produced in his own life.
- The Word has been useful to him and practical for him to live out.
- 2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.
- We cannot be passive or indifferent when it comes to God's Word.
- We must be doers of the Word not hearers only.
- At the same time, we must never think that our salvation, our eternal security, rests entirely on our record of obedience.
- No, we know our salvation, our eternal security, rests solely upon Christ's record of obedience, his righteousness alone!
- We have a responsibility to walk in the way of holiness, while simultaneously remembering that it is all of grace.
- In this way, God alone receives all of the glory and there is no room for boasting.

- Jesus himself said that it is only those who have been taught by the Father that are drawn to him and come to Christ (John 6:44-45).
- This is what the Father has done, He has taught you by his Word and Spirit through the preaching of the gospel, He has opened your heart, illuminated your mind that had been darkened to spiritual truth, He has made you willing, so that you would turn to Christ in faith.
- God's Word makes you wise as it works in your heart and life to produce a change of heart so that you begin to walk in his way and avoid the evil paths.

- The psalmist closes the stanza reflecting on how he has received wisdom from God's Word.
- V104, Through your precepts I get understanding..."
- He expresses how the wisdom that has been imparted to him and the change it has produced in him causes him to hate every false way.
- His deep affection for the Word of God causes him to have concern for the glory of God.
- He wants to obey and live a life that honors God.
- Wisdom has taught him to love what God loves and hate what God hates.
- That is the mark of true Christianity.
- Does that characterize your life?
- Do you live the kind of life that only the Word of God can produce?

IV. GOD'S WORD PROVIDES GUIDANCE

- V105 expresses the practicality of God's Word for the Christian life.
- The metaphor of the path is used again.
- Psalm 119:1 Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the way of the Lord!
- Psalm 1, the two paths, the way of the wicked that will perish and the way of the righteous that is the blessed life.
- Proverbs described the two paths as the path of wisdom and the path of folly.

- The psalmist uses the metaphor of a lamp and a light for how God's Word directs the life of the one whose appetite has been awakened to God's Word, who has been made wise by God's Word, whose life has been changed by God's Word, and who keeps God's Word.
 - V105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.
 - God's Word provides guidance to one's path, one's journey in life.
 - What's guiding your life?
 - What is it that gives you direction in making decisions, in what to do or not do?
 - What is the best guide for one's life? God's Word.
 - God's Word offers us the direction that we desperately need to navigate and chart our course through this dark, broken, sin-sick world.
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- This verse isn't meant to convey to us the idea that God's Word will give us specific, detailed, step by step direction for making all of life's decisions.
 - The imagery in mind is walking through a dark and dangerous place.
 - God's Word is like a flashlight that shines on the path in front of your feet.
 - Your path is illuminated such that you can see the danger areas ahead.
 - That's the kind of guidance God's Word offers us.
 - It provides us light to guide us on the path of righteousness and avoid all of the moral and spiritual pitfalls along the way.
 - We need the light of God's Word to navigate this world of darkness.
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- V107, 109, and 110 reminds us of the reality of the darkness of life.
 - V107 I am severely afflicted...so he cries out for life according to God's Word.
 - V109 I hold my life in my hadn't continually, but I do not forget your word.
 - V110 The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts.
 - The Christian life is marked by affliction, risk, and opposition.
 - This is the context of the Christian life, of the one who seeks to live by the wisdom of God's Word and be guided by God's Word.
 - It is into this darkness that we need the illuminating guidance of God's word to shine into; to light our path and to keep our feet from stumbling.
 - God's Word shows us the way to live, it illuminates the path that is within the bounds of righteousness to live for the glory of God.
 - Without God's Word we are in darkness.
 - Are you willing to be guided by God's Word?
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- The psalmist follows this expression of what God's Word is to him with a word of commitment to keep God's Word.
 - If we're to stay on the path illuminated by God's word for our feet we are going to need determination and intention to follow God's word.
 - V106 I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to keep your righteous rules.
 - V112 I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.
 - He makes a resolution, using the language of making a vow.
 - We should make resolutions trusting in God's help and enablement to fulfill them.
 - 2 Thess 1:11-12 To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, 12 so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - Paul writes that God will help you by his grace and power to keep your resolutions for good and those made in faith, so that Jesus may be glorified in us.

- We need to be resolved, determined, committed to walk in the path that God's Word illuminates for us.
- We must do like the psalmist did, "incline our hearts to perform your statutes..."
- Your feet will follow your appetites.
- If your appetite is for God's Word, if you've been made wise by His Word, changed by His Word, guided by His Word, if you love His Word, tasted the sweetness of His Word, your feet will be pointed in the direction that leads to life.
- This will produce praise and joy and gladness.
- V108 he asks God to accept his freewill offering of praise
- V111 he says God's Word is his inheritance, it is his treasure, because they are the joy of his heart.
- Is God's word something that produces praise and worship in you?
- Do you delight and find gladness and joy of heart in God's Word?
- Joy is an effect of knowing the truth and living out the truth.
- Psalm 119:140 Your promise is well tried, and your servant loves it.
- One of the evidences of new birth in Christ is that you love God's Word.
- A sign that a Christian is malnourished, that they have neglected the word, is the absence of joy and gladness in their life.
- Do you love God's word?
- Are you cultivating a taste for it?
- Do you want to read it, meditate on it, seek to understand it, and apply it to your heart?
- Commit to seeking the wisdom of God's Word, to being changed by God's Word as you obey it, and to be guided by God's Word through the darkness of this life.
- As we read through this psalm we see the perfect One whom this Psalm portrays and who lived out fully its implications.
- Jesus is wisdom from God. In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
- His sacrifice and death purchased our redemption.
- Jesus walked the path before us and he is the Light that now shows us the way home.
- He is our strong Redeemer and he alone can lead us through the darkness of this world and keep us securely on the path, guiding us all the way to the very end.

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?