

PSALM 119.33-40

psalm
God's Word 119

T. M. AND SUSIE MOORE

A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

Psalm 119.33-40
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Introduction to Psalm 119.33-40

Stanza 5 of Psalm 119 emphasizes the need for God's grace to understand and obey His Law. So many worldly allurements threaten to distract us from God's path. We must be aware of these and, fixing our gaze on the Lord and our heart on His Word, continue in faithful obedience to Him in all things.

We need daily revival from the Lord if we are to know that happiness that comes from obeying His Law. But we also need to devote ourselves to the Word of God and not allow worthless things to distract us from His calling.

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We hope you find this study of Psalm 119 instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

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1 All the Way

Pray Psalm 119.33.

Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes,
And I shall keep it to the end.

Sing Psalm 119.33.

(Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

Teach me, Lord, and help me follow in Your perfect, righteous way!
From my heart I will observe and all Your holy Law obey.
Give me understanding, Jesus: I will keep Your Law always!

Read Psalm 119.33-40; meditate on verse 33.

Preparation

1. What did the psalmist want God to do?
2. What did he promise?

Meditation

The **n** (*be*) stanza returns to themes already broached in Psalm 119, both to reprise important subjects and to remind us of things that can cause us to stray from God's Law.

The psalmist pleads with God to teach Him the way of His statutes. This is most important for two reasons: First, the teaching of God's Law is neglected, scorned, and ignored by a great many Christian teachers and writers today. Second, there's always the danger we might think a favorite preacher, teacher, or writer is the one to rely on for truth.

Nope. Only God can teach us His Word. We need to go to Him, be with Him, commune with Him in prayer as we read and study His Word, and wait on Him to give us understanding. Of course, preachers, teachers, and writers can help. But they do their best work when they guide you into the Word and turn your soul to the Lord (cf. Acts 8.26-35). Look to the guidance of reliable teachers, but only insofar as they lead you into the Presence of the Lord, where the Spirit of God can show you His glory and transform you into the image of Jesus (2 Cor. 3.12-18).

True learning has two ends: First to "keep" what God has taught us. That is, to grow and improve in loving Him and our neighbors (Matt. 22.34-40). Second, to keep such love to the end of your life. Thus a near horizon (the day before us) and a far horizon (what awaits us in the eternal Presence of the Lord) mark the way of the Lord. And there is always more to learn of Him and His Law all the way on our journey.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

The beauty of a sunrise or a sunset, although taking place on different horizons, is still breathtaking. "The heavens declare the glory of God..." (Ps. 19.1).

When I plead with God to "Teach me" (Ps. 119. 33), I am imploring Him to declare His glory to me through His Word and through His creation. And in turn, I am promising to keep what He has taught me "to the end" (vs. 33).

That is a vow. And making a vow, or a promise to God is not something we should do lightly:

“If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth” (Num. 30.2).

“When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin to you” (Deut. 23.21).

“When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; for He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed – better not to vow than to vow and not pay” (Eccl. 5.4, 5).

“Offer to God thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High” (Ps. 50.14).

“...I will pay You my vows, which...my mouth has spoken when I was in trouble” (Ps. 66.13, 14).

Indeed. We have asked God to do something for us. Maybe we were in trouble when we asked. Maybe we just long to be more like Jesus and so have asked Him to teach us how to do it. Either way, we have made a bit of a bargain with the Lord. You do this, please, and then I will do that. “You teach, I’ll do and obey to the end.”

Jesus encourages us to stay the course of our bargain with these words: “But hold fast what you have till I come. And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations – He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev. 2.25, 26, 29).

Kept to the end. He keeps us, we keep His Word.

As our dear granddaughter, Reagan, said loudly as a little girl at the end of a church service, “That’s all we do!”

For reflection

1. What is a vow? Should we make vows? Why or why not? If we make them, why must we keep them?
2. What do we mean by saying there are “two horizons” in our journey along the Lord’s way? Why is each important?
3. What’s on your “near horizon” for today? How will you stay in the Lord’s way?

Teach me thy statutes, not the mere words, but the way of applying them to myself. God, by his Spirit, gives a right understanding. But the Spirit of revelation in the word will not suffice, unless we have the Spirit of wisdom in the heart. God puts his Spirit within us, causing us to walk in his statutes. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Psalm 119.33

Pray Psalm 119.36, 37.

Pray that God will help you to covet Him and His Word only, and that He will guard your heart from straying into sin as you walk in His way today.

Sing Psalm 119.36, 37.

(Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

To Your holy testimonies, turn my heart, O gracious Lord.

Let me covet nothing worthless; my delight is in Your Word.

O revive me! O revive me, in Your way, most holy Lord!

2 Mind, Heart, Conscience, and Life

Pray Psalm 119.34.

Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law;
Indeed, I shall observe it with *my* whole heart.

Sing Psalm 119.34.

(Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

Teach me, Lord, and help me follow in Your perfect, righteous way!
From my heart I will observe and all Your holy Law obey.
Give me understanding, Jesus: I will keep Your Law always!

Read Psalm 119.33-40; meditate on verse 34.

Preparation

1. What did the psalmist want from the Lord?
2. To what would that lead?

Meditation

How do we know when we have learned the Law of God? Or any of His Word?

This verse suggests some very important aspects of learning. First, God must open our *mind*; He must give understanding. We do not achieve this on our own, by our own wits. Only God can give understanding of His Law and all His Word. We have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2.16), but we must submit ourselves to Him, hear Him as often and as fully as possible, and seek understanding from Him through contemplation, prayer, and patient waiting.

Second, when the Word engages our *heart* as well as our mind, that is, when what we are learning becomes so precious to us that we guard it diligently in our heart, then we are making progress in learning. When both our mind and heart agree together in understanding and delighting in God's Law, it becomes a permanent possession and joins the values harbored in our *conscience*. Once the Law is thus firmly established in our soul, *keeping* and *observing* it will come much more easily and consistently.

We will love and obey the Word and Law of God as our conscience absorbs what our heart embraces and our mind has understood. When we experience this happening in and through us, we can know that we have learned the Law of God, which is to say, we have learned Jesus (Eph. 4.17-24), Who is being formed within us by the glory and Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor. 3.12-18).

We have learned the Law and Word of God when we have learned Jesus and are walking in His way (Matt. 11.28-30; 1 Jn. 2.1-6).

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“I will strengthen the house of Judah, and
I will save the house of Joseph.
I will bring them back, because
I have mercy on them.
They shall be as though
I had not cast them aside; for

I AM the LORD their God, and
I will hear them” (Zech. 10.6)

Now that’s a bold claim! And God will do it. Just as He said. Just as He promised.

The psalmist is also making a bold claim.
“I shall keep Your law; [in fact]
I shall observe it with my whole heart” (Ps. 119.34). Wow!

This verse puts me in mind of the bellringers standing out in the freezing cold asking for money to feed the poor. But in our story, they are also promising that every penny that gets dropped in the bucket will go to the needy. Every last cent. All of it.

Can you see the correlation? We are ringing our bells calling out to the Lord, “Give me understanding. And when You do, I want You to know that every bit of Your effort and gift will go to my keeping Your Law. Every last scintilla of my heart’s longings will belong to You and Your Law. All of it. Every beat. Forever.”

Here is how we can come close to keeping that bold claim. Paul wrote, “...for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life...” (Phil. 2.13-16).

We can boldly claim, but we also must desperately cling to our Savior Who wants, even more than we, to help us succeed: “Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen” (Heb. 13.20, 21).

Give me understanding. And my all – mind, heart, and conscience – will be given to keeping Your Law. For Your glory, Your pleasure, and the good of my Personal Mission Field. Every day. Forever.

Bold.

For reflection

1. What are you calling on God to give you for this day? What are you claiming from Him?
2. Heart, mind, conscience, life – all true learning involves these together, soul and body. How do you know when you are truly learning Jesus?
3. What can you do to improve your ability to tap into the Spirit’s power for learning Jesus?

God puts a restraint principally on the heart, that genuine uprightness may flourish there, whose fruits may afterwards appear in the life. This spiritual observance of the law is a most convincing evidence of the necessity of being divinely prepared and formed for it. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Psalm 119.34

Pray Psalm 119.38-40.

Ask God to show you how to serve Him today. Devote yourself to Him and to His Word. Seek the reviving work of the Holy Spirit so that you long to please the Lord in everything you do today.

Psalm 119.33-40

Sing Psalm 119.38-40.

(Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

Set me firmly in Your statutes, for Your servant, Lord am I.

Fearing You in sweet devotion, let me live until I die.

Let no dread, let no reproach obscure Your judgments from my eye.

For Your holy precepts, Jesus, my whole heart longs earnestly,

for Your judgments all are good; Your Word is a delight to me!

In Your righteousness revive me! For Your goodness I would see!

3 Grace for the Path

Pray Psalm 119.35.

Make me walk in the path of Your commandments,
For I delight in it.

Sing Psalm 119.35.

(Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

Make me walk in Your commandments, let me keep Your holy part.
I will keep Your Law unailing; from it let me ne'er depart.
For Your Word is my delight, Lord; help me keep it from the heart.

Read Psalm 119.33-40; meditate on verse 35.

Preparation

1. What does the psalmist want God to do?
2. Why does he want God to do this?

Meditation

We cannot make ourselves *delight* in God's Law. The winds of the world and even the Church today blow *against* delighting in God's Law. All around us, the spiritual air we breathe wants to contaminate our souls with negative attitudes toward the Law of God. We must delight in God's Law, but He must do it for us.

How can this be realized? Only by the grace of God. The psalmist pleads with God to "make me walk" His path. He was not naturally inclined to delight in God's commandments nor to walk in His path. It takes a *supernatural* work to change the inward bent of the soul and teach us the true nature of delight. Only God can do this. Unless He gives us grace to delight in His commandments and walk His path, we'll just continue filling the sails of our soul with the winds of lawlessness, and thus we will fail to love God and our neighbors as we should (Matt. 24.12).

Nonetheless, the psalmist knew that tapping into the grace of God, receiving the favor God freely offers, is realized through faith and obedience. As he prayed for grace, he *acted* in obedience to God's Law, for he knew the grace of God would meet him, empower ("make me") his obedience, and confirm his delight in the commandments of God (Phil. 2.12, 13).

As you read, meditate in, and contemplate God's Law – and all his Word – plead for grace and plan for obedience. Call on the Lord to *make you* delight in His commandments, and all His Word; and determine to walk in His way. The more you do, and the more you experience that sense of delight, the more your soul will begin to incline toward Jesus and the joy and power that come from knowing and obeying Him.

Plus, the more you do, the more you'll realize it is God at work in you, willing and doing according to His good pleasure in making you more like Jesus (Phil. 2.13; 2 Cor. 3.12-18). And then you will give Him more abundant thanks and praise (2 Cor. 4.15).

Treasures *Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

And delight. So much of the Christian walk is a circuitous motion.

First, He saves us by His grace. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Eph. 2.8, 9).

Then He allows us to implore Him for more grace. "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that

we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4.16). This is grace that empowers us to obey.

Then, because of His grace, He allows us to see the futility of not pleading for grace to be obedient to Him. “He who keeps the commandment keeps his soul, but he who is careless (despises or is reckless) with his ways will die” (Prov. 19.16). Just a heads up.

He also allows us to see how foolish we look when we disobey: “The foolishness of a man twists his way, and his heart frets against the LORD” (Prov. 19.3). Yeah. Just don’t.

Then He gives us the power of His grace to obey Him: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...” (Acts 1.8).

Then finally He warns us to stay the course, to ask Him, through His grace to “Make [us] walk in the path of [His] commandments” because only then will we find true delight in keeping His Law” (Ps. 119.35).

“You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen” (2 Pet. 3.17, 18).

Grace. Obedience. Grace. Don’t be foolish. Grace. Steadfastness. Grace. Delight. Grace. It’s all of God. But we must participate. Wholeheartedly: “I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law in within my heart” (Ps. 40.8).

For reflection

1. How does grace work with faith and obedience? To what ends?
2. Why do we need the grace of God to discover the delight of living within His Law?
3. What can you do so that reading, meditating in, and obeying God’s commandments is a delight?

Let it be remembered, that he does not boast of the inherent working of his nature, but sets forth the grace he has received, that God may complete the work he has begun. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Psalm 119.35*

Pray Psalm 119.38-40.

Pray that God will give such a firm understanding and joyous delight in His Word that you will gladly walk His path in all you do today.

Sing Psalm 119.38-40.

(Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

Set me firmly in Your statutes, for Your servant, Lord am I.

Fearing You in sweet devotion, let me live until I die.

Let no dread, let no reproach obscure Your judgments from my eye.

For Your holy precepts, Jesus, my whole heart longs earnestly,
for Your judgments all are good; Your Word is a delight to me!
In Your righteousness revive me! For Your goodness I would see!

4 Look Where You're Going

Pray Psalm 119.36, 37.

Incline my heart to Your testimonies,
And not to covetousness.
Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things,
And revive me in Your way.

Sing Psalm 119.36, 37.

(Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)
To Your holy testimonies, turn my heart, O gracious Lord.
Let me covet nothing worthless; my delight is in Your Word.
O revive me! O revive me, in Your way, most holy Lord!

Read Psalm 119.33-40; meditate on verses 36, 37.

Preparation

1. How did the psalmist plan to resist the sin of covetousness?
2. What would he have to do to make sure he didn't covet?

Meditation

The alternative to delighting in, longing for, and walking in God's testimonies – His Word – is covetousness (v. 36). Covetousness is inordinate or excessive desire and diverts us from the Lord's path. Desiring God and His Word is a work of the Spirit to which we submit and which we pursue by coming to the Word every day, reading and meditating and listening to the Lord, looking to Him to guide our steps for the day ahead. As we do this every day, our joy in the Lord increases, our sense of the value and importance of the Word becomes stronger, our walk with Him is more consistent, and our work for Him bears more fruit.

So guard against covetousness by desiring the Lord and His Word. Look to His way and not the way of self, sin, and the world. Covetousness is especially problematic in that it is a gateway to all sin. When we covet, we turn from looking to the Lord to lust for things or experiences or status. These become our god, if only for a season, and the more we look at them, the more they lead us into all kinds of self-indulgence and straying from the Lord's path. Thus we break the first, second, and third commandments. Those broken, all the rest will fall in time.

Things are not all worthless. They are worthless to the extent that they engender covetousness, lust, inordinate desire, and forsaking the Lord and His ways (v. 37). Therefore pray daily for the Lord to revive you, and put you in the stream of His blessing, where the Spirit flows with the Word of God to refresh and shape your soul for obedience.

So look where you're going – in the Lord's path for His glory, and not in the paths of self and sin.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

There are three actions that we are requesting of God that He do for us (Ps. 119.36, 37):

1. Incline, lean, move, push my heart to Your testimonies.
2. Turn my eyes away from looking at anything that has no value toward my growth in You.
3. Revive me in the only way possible – through Your way and through Your Word.

And why are we asking Him to do these three things?

1. So that we can be pleasing to Him.
2. So that we are focused on Him.

3. So that we grow in Him.

So that we, and those in our Personal Mission Field, may have Christ dwelling in our hearts through faith; that we, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height – to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that we may be filled with all the fullness of God (Eph. 3.17-19).

God has a word of encouragement for us when we seek these actions from Him:

“Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls” (Jer. 6.16).

And then our loving Savior adds this: “Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matt. 11.28-30).

Incline. Turn. Revive.

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.
(Lemmel, 1922)*

For reflection

1. What is covetousness? Why is it especially important that we guard against this?
2. What is your role in turning your eyes away from worthless things? Is it reasonable to expect God’s help in this if you’re unwilling to look away and look to Him? Explain.
3. What does it mean for the Lord to revive you? How will you know when you are being revived? How can you seek revival daily?

It remains, therefore, that our hearts are full of sinful thoughts, and wholly rebellious, until God by his grace change them. This confession on the part of the prophet must not be overlooked, That the natural corruption of man is so great, that he seeks for any thing rather than what is right, until he be turned by the power of God to new obedience, and thus begin to be inclined to that which is good. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Psalm 119.36

Pray Psalm 119.33-35.

Spread your day out before the Lord in prayer – every activity, meeting, task, etc. Seek Him for guidance in how you should serve Him in each situation. Pray for ongoing understanding of His Word so you might walk the path of His commandments, delighting in Him as you are going (Matt. 28.18-20).

Sing Psalm 119.33-35.

(Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

Teach me, Lord, and help me follow in Your perfect, righteous way!
From my heart I will observe and all Your holy Law obey.
Give me understanding, Jesus: I will keep Your Law always!

Make me walk in Your commandments, let me keep Your holy part.
I will keep Your Law unailing; from it let me ne’er depart.
For Your Word is my delight, Lord; help me keep it from the heart.

5 The Word Exalted

Pray Psalm 119.38.

Establish Your word to Your servant,
Who *is devoted* to fearing You.

(New American Standard Bible)

Establish Your word to Your servant,
As that which produces reverence for You.

Sing Psalm 119.38.

(Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

Set me firmly in Your statutes, for Your servant, Lord am I.
Fearing You in sweet devotion, let me live until I die.
Let no dread, let no reproach obscure Your judgments from my eye.

Read Psalm 119.33-40; meditate on verse 38.

Preparation

1. What does the psalmist want?
2. From what and to what would this lead?

Meditation

Every word of Scripture matters. Get one wrong in translation, and it can affect the meaning of a whole verse and the understanding of an entire doctrine. In today's verse, the hinge word is the relative pronoun, אֲשֶׁר, *ab-SHARE*). It can mean either "who" or "which". In this instance, I think the *New American Standard Bible* translation is better than the *New King James Version*. So let's treat it from that vantage point.

The psalmist wants God to "establish" His Word to him – literally, to lift it up, exalt it, raise it high before Him. Why? Because when the Word has that exalted position in our lives, it engenders the fear of the Lord (here, *NKJV* is better than *NASB*). In this case, "which" refers to the exalting of God's Word. This is how we increase in the fear of the Lord, which leads to obedience and wisdom (Ps. 111.10), by putting His Word above everything else in our lives as the defining vantage point for all we do.

But that doesn't mean we just wait around for Him to do that. No, we must by faith get at the Word daily, applying ourselves diligently by reading, meditation, study, conversation, and more of each, so that the Word gains the pre-eminence it deserves and we need. Faith that leads to obedience engages grace that leads to wisdom.

Our grandsons George and Ralph have a fun thing they like me to do. One at a time, they present themselves before me and say, "Granddad, lift me." They know I can do it, and they are exhilarated to be all the way up to the ceiling. But they must take the first steps, clenching their fists, straightening their arms and locking them into place, and working hard to keep them there as I lift them high.

Because we fear God and love His Word, we take the steps needed to get into it daily. God then exalts His Word before us, leading to increase in joyous and obedient fear of our loving God. When this is the case, sin won't lead us astray.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Fear is an awareness of danger, an anxious concern, or a profound reverence and awe especially toward God. Reverence is honor or respect felt or shown, deference, or a profound adoring awed respect.

Words differently nuanced with similar meanings, yet both are required attitudes toward God. And God's Word and Law must be firmly established in our heart, mind, soul, and spirit for us to exhibit either of these characteristics in proof of our devotion to Him.

"God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be held in reverence by all those around Him" (Ps. 89.7). Fear. Reverence.

"You shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary: I AM the LORD" (Lev. 19.30). Obedience
Reverence.

"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12.28). Service. Reverence. Fear.

"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10.28). Fear. Wisdom.

"Fear God" (1 Pet. 2.17). Fear.

There is no way we can serve God correctly, nor be obedient to Him consistently, without a sincere fear and reverence for Him. In light of this truth, we plead with God to "Establish Your Word to Your servant." (Ps. 119.38) Namely, me.

Two additional translations help us learn how to pray this correctly:

"Confirm to Your servant Your promise" (ESV).

"Reassure me of Your promise" (NLT).

The day we claimed Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord was the day we were established with Him. In the same way that some companies tell us in their logo when they began, or were established, we too know when our Christian status was established. Confirmed and reassured.

When we are devoted only to Him, to fear Him, and reverence Him, we can fully trust that as we are daily seeking Him in our mutual "establishment" He will meet with us, filling us with His Spirit and enabling us to walk in the way that is pleasing to Him. Fearfully. Reverently. Established.

For reflection

1. What is the fear of God? Why is it so important? How does exalting the Word of God help us in fearing Him?
2. Does the fear of God mean we don't love Him? How do these two work together in the life of faith?
3. What is your responsibility in having God highly exalt His Word in your life?

*And truly the best assurance which we can have of obtaining our requests is when these and God's service harmonize, and our sole desire is that he may reign in and over us. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Psalm 119.38**

Pray Psalm 119.33-37.

Use the verbs in these verses to seek the Lord for better understanding of and greater delight in His Word. Be specific in committing your day – all its activities – to keeping and observing His Word and walking in His path.

Psalm 119.33-40

Sing Psalm 119.33-37.

(Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

Teach me, Lord, and help me follow in Your perfect, righteous way!

From my heart I will observe and all Your holy Law obey.

Give me understanding, Jesus: I will keep Your Law always!

Make me walk in Your commandments, let me keep Your holy part.

I will keep Your Law unfailing; from it let me ne'er depart.

For Your Word is my delight, Lord; help me keep it from the heart.

To Your holy testimonies, turn my heart, O gracious Lord.

Let me covet nothing worthless; my delight is in Your Word.

O revive me! O revive me, in Your way, most holy Lord!

6 From Reproach to Revival

Pray Psalm 119.39, 40.

Turn away my reproach which I dread,
For Your judgments *are* good.
Behold, I long for Your precepts;
Revive me in Your righteousness.

Sing Psalm 119.39, 40.

(Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

For Your holy precepts, Jesus, my whole heart longs earnestly,
for Your judgments all are good; Your Word is a delight to me!
In Your righteousness revive me! For Your goodness I would see!

Read Psalm 119.33-40; meditate on verses 39, 40.

Preparation

1. What does the psalmist *not* want?
2. What does he seek from the Lord?

Meditation

One work of the Holy Spirit is to convict us of sin, which He does by writing the Law on our soul and making it like a burr in our sinful saddle, so that we ache with spiritual discomfort whenever we sin (Jn. 16.8-11; Rom. 7.7). Such “reproach” is painful. It makes us aware just how unfaithful we are to Him Who loves us and gave His Son for our salvation. We would like never to have to endure such reproaches, but, like the psalmist with his tendency to covet (v. 36), we will all fall through temptation into sin from time to time (1 Jn. 1.8).

So we’d better know what to do when that happens.

The judgments of God are good, and that’s why we feel bad when the Spirit convicts us of sin. But, at the same time He reproaches us, the Spirit convicts us of righteousness. That is, He shows us the way back into right fellowship with God through His good judgments: confess your sin, repent, and seek the Lord’s path again, the way of His precepts.

If we truly long for the precepts of God – His Law and all His Word – we will hasten to them to find the word of forgiveness, renewal, and direction for overcoming our sin. That’s what this stanza of Psalm 119 has been all about. Turn away from sin when conviction comes; turn back to God and His Word. The longing expressed here matches the “whole heart” (vv. 34, 36) and “delight” (v. 35) expressed earlier in the psalm. Our psalmist sincerely desires release from the temptation to covet so that he might know the joy of God’s Law and keep to His way.

When reproach or conviction comes, listen to the judgment of God, turn back to His Word, and call on Him to revive you. As you do, His grace will meet you unto righteousness every time.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

I dread God’s reproach. Not only is His chastening unpleasant, but His disappointment is even worse. I know that His judgments are good, and I know that His judgment is good. He never makes a mistake when His Law is broken. He wrote it, He knows when it is infringed. When I break and violate His Law He knows and is displeased.

So He chastens me. Which in some respects solidifies my relationship with Him: “My [child], do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens...for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness” (Heb. 12.5, 6, 10). He wants me to be more like Him. More resemblant of my Father. So, He deals with my sin in His own loving way.

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent” (Rev. 3.19).

“Behold, happy is the [person] whom God corrects; therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty. For He bruises, but He binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole” (Job 5.17, 18). All to make us more like Jesus.

I long for God’s precepts because they help me, through the indwelling Holy Spirit, to live in an unreproachful way. I know more about what pleases and displeases Him, and my conscience is more readily pricked the closer I get to His Law. Sin is all the more grotesque in the light of His glorious grace.

But God must revive me in His righteousness. In His Way. And in His Word. “Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God; Your Spirit is good. Lead me in the land of uprightness. Revive me, O LORD, for Your name’s sake! For Your righteousness’ sake bring my soul out of trouble” (Ps. 143.10, 11).

And then as His chastened child I hear these words of assurance: “Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come...Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (Rev. 1.4-6).

Now that’s reproach to revival!

For reflection

1. How do you know when you are being reproached by God?
2. How do the precepts of God help us in avoiding His reproaches?
3. How can believers help one another when they come under the reproach of God?

When Satan has drawn a child of God into worldly compliances, he will reproach him with the falls into which he led him. Victory must come from the cross of Christ. When we enjoy the sweetness of God’s precepts, it will make us long for more acquaintance with them. And where God has wrought to will, he will work to do. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Psalm 119.39

Pray Psalm 119.33-38.

In silence, let the Lord search your thoughts, desires, and priorities. Ask Him to shed the light of His truth on your soul, and to set you free from anything that keeps you from being revived in Jesus. Commit your day to the Lord with thanksgiving.

Sing Psalm 119.33-38.

(Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

Teach me, Lord, and help me follow in Your perfect, righteous way!
From my heart I will observe and all Your holy Law obey.
Give me understanding, Jesus: I will keep Your Law always!

Make me walk in Your commandments, let me keep Your holy part.

Psalm 119.33-40

I will keep Your Law unfailing; from it let me ne'er depart.
For Your Word is my delight, Lord; help me keep it from the heart.

To Your holy testimonies, turn my heart, O gracious Lord.
Let me covet nothing worthless; my delight is in Your Word.
O revive me! O revive me, in Your way, most holy Lord!

Set me firmly in Your statutes, for Your servant, Lord am I.
Fearing You in sweet devotion, let me live until I die.
Let no dread, let no reproach obscure Your judgments from my eye.

7 To Walk God's Pathway

Pray Psalm 119.35-37.

Make me walk in the path of Your commandments,
For I delight in it.
Incline my heart to Your testimonies,
And not to covetousness.
Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things,
And revive me in Your way.

Sing Psalm 119.35-37.

(Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

Make me walk in Your commandments, let me keep Your holy part.
I will keep Your Law unfailing; from it let me ne'er depart.
For Your Word is my delight, Lord; help me keep it from the heart.

To Your holy testimonies, turn my heart, O gracious Lord.
Let me covet nothing worthless; my delight is in Your Word.
O revive me! O revive me, in Your way, most holy Lord!

Read Psalm 119.33-40; meditate on verses 119.35-37.

Preparation

1. What does the psalmist want to see happen?
2. What will be necessary for that to happen?

Meditation

These verses constitute an *inclusio* in the middle of this stanza, beginning with the word “path” in verse 35 and returning to that idea in the word “way” in verse 37. These are two different words in the Hebrew, but they represent the same idea. The psalmist wants to walk the path marked out by God's commandments. But He needs the Lord to revive Him in His way. What does that involve?

We must make sure our hearts are right toward the Word of God, and that we delight in it above all else (v. 35). We want to say with Jeremiah, “Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart” (Jer. 15.16). For this to be so, we must *incline* our heart to His Word (v. 36). That is, calling on the Lord, we must discipline our heart to love God's Word (cf. v. 97) so much that nothing will captivate our affections more. The heart is the most important part of the soul, for from it flow all the issues of life (Prov. 4.23). We must guard and incline it with all diligence.

This requires that we learn to recognize and resist the temptation to covet, and thus to have our affections diverted from God and His Word. Coveting is the gateway to all sin precisely because it hijacks the heart. By setting our heart on God and His Word and seeking Him daily for revival, we can walk His pathway faithfully.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

The psalmist understood that the first way to keep himself from coveting was to make sure that he constantly looked at the right things rather than at the wrong: “Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things.” (Ps. 119.37)

He also understood that the way God summed up the Ten Commandments agreed with this: “You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female

servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's" (Ex. 20.17). Yup. In Old Testament vernacular that pretty much covers everything that belonged to someone else.

Our psalmist then decided to change his attitude and change his heart. "Revive me in Your way and in Your words" (Ps. 119.37). "You who love the LORD, hate evil!" (Ps. 97.10). Good start. Then, "I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me. A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will not know wickedness" (Ps. 101.3, 4).

He broke the pattern he was in; he repented and turned away by trusting the Lord for the strength to completely change his own way in life. He said, "No, thank you" to all the worthless things that he was doing and looking at. It was the necessary first step.

Paul affirms and confirms the psalmist's thoughts: "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good" (Rom. 12.9).

Then he set out a ten-step program to change our way of thinking and incline our heart to good (Rom. 12.10-21):

1. Be kind and affectionate to one another in a brotherly way.
2. Give preference, with honor, to one another.
3. Diligently do good, and don't be slow to do it.
4. Be fervent in spirit as you serve the Lord.
5. Rejoice in the hope you have firmly placed in the Lord.
6. Be patient in tribulation and trouble.
7. Pray always and continue steadfastly in this activity.
8. Distribute goods to meet the needs of the church.
9. Be hospitable with the things God has blessed you with.
10. Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.

Search the Word daily. In it you will find strength and refreshing promises to guide and guard your heart. For God promises us that after our every misstep and repentance He will rightly step in and renew us. "Then I will give them a new heart to know Me, that I AM the LORD; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart" (Jer. 24.7). Revived.

Ready once again to walk God's pathway.

For reflection

1. How can meditating in the Law of God equip us to recognize temptations?
2. What steps should we take to resist temptation when we find ourselves in it?
3. How can you know when you are "walking" in God's "pathway"? How can you encourage other believers to do so? Whom will you encourage today?

Those that would have the love of God rooted in them, must get the love of the world rooted out; for the friendship of the world is enmity with God. Quicken me in thy way; to redeem time, and to do every duty with liveliness of spirit. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Psalm 119.33-40*

Pray Psalm 119.33, 34, 38-40.

Pray that God will increase your longing for His Word, that He would teach you and give you understanding, and that you will keep His Law – and all His Word – in everything you do.

Psalm 119.33-40

Sing Psalm 119.33, 34, 38-40.

Regent Square: *Angels from the Realms of Glory*)

Teach me, Lord, and help me follow in Your perfect, righteous way!

From my heart I will observe and all Your holy Law obey.

Give me understanding, Jesus: I will keep Your Law always!

Set me firmly in Your statutes, for Your servant, Lord am I.

Fearing You in sweet devotion, let me live until I die.

Let no dread, let no reproach obscure Your judgments from my eye.

For Your holy precepts, Jesus, my whole heart longs earnestly,

for Your judgments all are good; Your Word is a delight to me!

In Your righteousness revive me! For Your goodness I would see!

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. What is covetousness? Why is it a gateway to all sin?
2. How can you recognize when you might be coveting some “worthless thing”?
3. How would you counsel a new believer to resist the temptation to covet?
4. Why do we need daily revival from the Lord? How can we attain it?
5. What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned from this part of our study of Psalm 119?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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