

Psalm 119
week 5, v. 108-109

What is the difference between something that is forced and something that is willingly given?

Ps 119:108 O accept the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me Thine ordinances.

accept <ratsah> to be pleased with; specifically, to satisfy a debt: -- to be acceptable, accomplish, set affection, approve, consent with, delight (self), enjoy, favourable, ...

In thinking of who we are and who God is, the idea that He would accept anything from us is mind-boggling. The very best of what we can offer is certainly not needed by God. But, it is desired from Him to have our love. So much so that He sent Jesus.

Think of the sweet art projects made by little children in Sunday school. Their best efforts are often unrecognizable and ill representations of what is in their heart when they present them to their parents, teachers, etc. Yet, we treasure those offerings because of the effort and love that are presented with them. **Isn't this the same with God?**

My heart's desire is to sincerely love Him with all my actions, thoughts, words, in everything I do. Yet my offerings fall short with times of weakness, selfishness and forgetfulness. Because of Christ, God as our Father, sees my effort through the death and resurrection of His Son. He treasures me because of Christ's love presented in my offerings.

Here, the Psalmist is specifically talking about the words he offers to God. He calls them the freewill offerings of his mouth. These are our prayers: the gifts of praise offered to God through spoken word. Freewill offerings would be different than the offerings demanded in the Law for sin. These offerings are prayers of our own accord, our own choice, unconstrained by external requirements. Again, although we are unable to pray effectively on our own, through Christ and the Holy Spirit given to God's children, the murmurings of imperfect praise towards God are accepted as gifts of our love.

The offerings (spontaneous, abundant, voluntary offerings) we lift up to God should be frequent if we follow the Psalmist's example. **Do we recognize God in everything**

or just when we're in a pickle? Does our gratitude towards God lead us to spontaneous expressions of praise? Praising God and petitioning God as we go through our day gives praise to Him as our provider for everything. We are solely dependent on God for even the air we breathe.

Heb 13:15 Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.

Ho 14:2 Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to Him, "Take away all iniquity, and receive [us] graciously, that we may present the fruit of our lips.

Eph 5:20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;

Ps 34:1 I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

Isa 63:7 I shall make mention of the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has granted us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He has granted them according to His compassion, and according to the multitude of His lovingkindnesses.

Col 3:17 And whatever you do in word or deed, [do] all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

1Th 5:18 in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1Pe 4:11 Whoever speaks, [let him speak,] as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, [let him do so] as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

It's an amazing thing to think that we (imperfect, weak, unworthy), as beloved children of God, can ask Him to accept and even be pleased with the words we offer to Him! And ... He answers us with His instruction in order that we can continually grow in our understanding of how to follow Him.

And teach me Thine ordinances.

teach <lamad> to goad, to teach, diligently, expertly, instruction, skillfully

Ps 119:12 Blessed art Thou, O LORD; Teach me Thy statutes.

Ps 25:4 Make me know Thy ways, O LORD; Teach me Thy paths.

Ps 119:169 Let my cry come before Thee, O LORD; Give me understanding according to Thy word.

When we request acceptance it speaks of humility, we recognize our need. When we request teaching we agree that we don't know everything and want to improve, which again points towards a humble heart. Psalm 119:108 reminds us of the necessity to come before God with gratitude and a sincere heart acknowledging the incredible, undeserved gift of our relationship with Him.

How will you apply this scripture? What action will you take in response?

In the next verse of this section, David gives us his response to how precious God's laws are to him. Even though his life is continually in danger, his focus is on remembering God's laws.

You've heard of the word compromise. What does it mean? What causes people to compromise? When is compromise acceptable? When is it unacceptable?

Ps 119:109 My life is continually in my hand, Yet I do not forget Thy law.

The picture is that the Psalmist's life is being held in an open hand. Something held in an open hand is in danger of being taken. Also, this open hand represents that David knows his life is not his to keep, it belongs to God to do with as He will.

David put his life in his hand when he went up against Goliath.

1Sa 19:5 "For he took his life in his hand and struck the Philistine, and the LORD brought about a great deliverance for all Israel; you saw [it] and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood, by putting David to death without a cause?"

Perhaps verse 109 is also a picture of willingness to offer our lives freely for the sake of following God. An opened hand is not clinging to something, rather it is holding onto something loosely.

What does this picture say about where David sees his safety and guidance coming from? Where does your safety and guidance come from? Is it in the truth and promises of God's word?

Think about this. Saul hates David because of who he is, what he stands for and the perceived threat Saul feels from him. David could choose to 'water down' his faith, 'sugar coat' the truth or whatever may make things easier for him. But he doesn't! He will follow God at any cost! I would suggest that none of us have someone hunting us down for our faith and putting our life in jeopardy. But we can be ostracized, ridiculed, lose relationships of family and friends, perhaps even lose popularity or promotions, because of our faith if it is well known what we believe and there is no compromise. Are we willing to hold our plans, desires, success, and reputation loosely in the open palms of our hands and focus on following God's

ways? God's grace will keep His children strong when temptations arise that may cause us to consider compromising our faith. Let's pray that we never forsake God in order to save our skin.

"Fear often drives away holy thought, and urges men to sin; faith enables the believer to remain in quiet communion with God, even when life itself is in danger."

Spurgeon Devotional Commentary

Ps 119:83 *Though I have become like a wineskin in the smoke, I do not forget Thy statutes.*

Trouble makes many a man forget his duty, and it would have had the same effect upon the Psalmist if he had not obtained quickening (Ps 119:107) and teaching (Ps 119:108). In his memory of the Lord's law lay his safety; he was certain not to be forgotten of God, for God was not forgotten of him. It is a special proof of grace when nothing can drive truth out of our thoughts, or holiness out of our lives.

Application Questions

Contrast a freewill offering with something that is forced. Why do you think the Psalmist used this description of his praise to God?

How frequent are your prayers lifted towards God? Do you pray only when you are in need? How does gratitude fit in with prayer?

What do the following verses say about praising God?

Hebrews 13:15

Ephesians 5:20

Psalms 34:1

Isaiah 63:7

Colossians 3:17

According to Psalm 119:108, who teaches us about what God wants? Explain why God is our best teacher. See Psalm 119:169.

Is it easier to teach someone who thinks they know everything or someone who recognizes they have a lot to learn? With what attitude do you approach God's word?

Think of those times when your life gets crazy: too much to do, not enough sleep, stressful circumstances, illness, etc. Does your time with God increase or decrease? What needs to come first all the time, especially when your sanity is on the line?

Why is the picture of an open hand in Psalm 119:109 important? Where does your safety and guidance come from? Does fear and adversity drive you closer to God or away from Him?