

Psalms 119 - Session

Week 8, v.20

We are all familiar with heartbreak. The definition of heartbreak is intense sorrow caused by a loved one; the emotions felt from the end of a romance, or grief or disappointment; overwhelming mental anguish or grief, especially that caused by loss or disappointment.

Think about these words: my soul is crushed. The word soul <nepesh> is your very life. (Gen 1:20; 2:7) The words being used are intense.

To be crushed means to be brought low in condition or status. Some synonyms are: broken, humbled, low, oppressed, smashed

To experience true heartbreak and to be emotionally crushed are strong words which cause strong feelings.

Look back upon your life and remember a time when you experienced these emotions. Now let's look at how David describes his desire to know God.

Ps 119:20 My soul is crushed with longing After Thine ordinances at all times.

Verse 20. My soul breaketh. We have a similar expression: It broke my heart, that is heart-breaking, She died of a broken heart. It expresses excessive longing, grievous disappointment, hopeless love, accumulated sorrow. By this we may see the hungering and thirsting which the psalmist had after righteousness, often mingled with much despondency.

Adam Clarke's Commentary

Think of a child who has been promised something and can hardly wait until it happens.

Pr 13:12 Hope deferred makes the heart sick, But desire fulfilled is a tree of life.

Take a minute in your own mind to honestly describe your desire to know God. How strong is it? Where is God placed on the list of your priorities?

Does your soul feel heavy with the strong desire to know God? Are you burdened to put the knowledge God reveals to you to practice? In Psalm 119:18 David has prayed that God would open his eyes to see the truth. Then in Psalm 119:19 he pleads with God to not hide truth from him. In this verse, Psalm 119:20, he discloses his strong desire to know God and live in His commands. Another important part of David's request is that he is not wanting the knowledge of God only sometimes - just when he is really discouraged or when he is extremely thankful - but all the time, in all circumstances.

It was constant--at all times. It was not now and then, in a good humour, that he was so fond of the word of God; but it is the habitual temper of every sanctified soul to hunger after the word of God as its necessary food, which there is no living without. Matthew Henry's Commentary

Look at this familiar verse:

Ps 42:1-2 As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for Thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?

What does it mean to be thirsty?

Wordweb: thirsty - feeling a need or desire to drink; extremely desirous "thirsty for information"

Thirst is the craving for fluids, resulting in the basic [instinct](#) of animals to [drink](#)... Continuous [dehydration](#) can cause many problems,... Dehydration occurs when water loss exceeds water intake,... Mild dehydration is characterised by thirst and general discomfort. Some of the physical signs of dehydration are confusion, tiredness and irritability. What happens when we are without God's word working in our lives? What is the solution?

Ps 63:1 (A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.) O God, Thou art my God; I shall seek Thee earnestly; my soul thirsts for Thee, my flesh yearns for Thee, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

Ps 84:2 My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.

Ps 119:40 Behold, I long for Thy precepts; revive me through Thy righteousness.

Ps 119:131 I opened my mouth wide and panted, for I longed for Thy commandments.

The word panted in the above Psalm 119:131, means to inhale eagerly, to swallow up.

How many of you have dogs? We have a little French Bull dog named Lily. She is so eager to eat that she literally inhales her food and causes herself to be sick. We have to put a rock in her food dish to slow her down. The picture I want you to see is the overwhelming desire to eat. She will stop at nothing to fill her tummy. Food is constantly on her mind. Hence, Lily is a lousy watch dog because she would probably help someone pack up the house if possible for food!

In Psalm 119:20, David says his soul is crushed with longing. His need to know God's word and follow it is so strong it feels as if his soul is breaking with desire.

Again, this longing is felt *at all times*. Not just sometimes - in the morning, at Bible study or Growth Group, at a Sunday service - it is continuous. **What does this longing look like in your life?**

Do we hunger after the word of God? Is our desire strong to always understand more and more and to practice what we know to be right? Matthew Poole's Commentary translates this section of scripture to mean *desiring a more sound knowledge of God's ordinances and a more serious practice of them*. Having a strong desire, to the point of heartbreak, at all times to grow in knowledge and practice of God's ways is a sure testimony of true faith.

A high value of the Lord's commandment leads to a pressing desire to know and to do it, and this so weighs upon the soul that it is ready to break in pieces under the crush of its own longings. ^{TOD}

About every six months or so, I get this intense desire to eat chocolate. I'm not really a chocolate lover so it always surprises me. Once I eat something chocolaty, the desire is quickly gone. In fact, usually just a bite is enough to satisfy the feeling of need.

We can have many strong desires. Perhaps we are hungry and are grocery shopping - doesn't everything look good? Maybe we wake up one morning and decide to start exercising or re-do a room or work outside. Whatever these desires are that hit us are temporary. They usually don't last and they come and go as strong as the wind in this valley.

This example is the opposite of what our desire for God's word should be! The longing to know God more and His judgments should only increase as we taste His truth. The appetite we have for God should be insatiable! It doesn't come and go depending on what's going on in our lives. A small taste of truth in a child of God should never be enough, it should produce a longing for more of the same. *Do you know people who turn to God **only** at the peak of trouble in their lives? When nothing else is working, when everything they have tried has failed?* When all comfort in and of ourselves is gone, it's easy to go to God. The desire to remain at God's feet, under His judgment, should be just as strong when things are going well.

"at all times," or "in every season." Prosperity could not make him forget it; adversity could not quench it. In sickness or health, in happiness or sadness, in company or alone, nothing overcame that longing. F. G. Marchant

Ps 106:3 How blessed are those who keep justice, who practice righteousness *at all times!*

Job 23:11 "My foot has held fast to His path; I have kept His way and not turned aside.

Job 27:10 "Will he take delight in the Almighty, will he call on God *at all times?*

The word "ordinances" in Psalms 119:20 is translated judgments in the KJV. It literally means God's divine law, His judgments which are without error and in which there is no challenge by us.

Think about this: *what is the difference in reaction to Biblical answers between someone who loves God and someone who does not love God?*

Do you rejoice in the truth? Do you have a constant desire to know God more? Are you excited to speak of things of the Lord or do you get bored when the conversation turns that way?

True godliness lies very much in desires. As we are not what we shall be, so also we are not what we would be. The desires of gracious men after holiness are intense, -- they cause a wear of heart, a straining of the mind, till it feels ready to snap with the heavenly pull. ... What a blessing it is when all our desires are after the things of God. We may well long for such longings. ... The most intimate communion between the

soul and its God is carried on by the process described in the text. God reveals his will, and our heart longs to be conformed thereto. God judges, and our heart rejoices in the verdict. This is fellowship of heart most real and thorough. ^{TOD}

Think about your fellowship with God. There should be present a longing to obey Him. There should be present a desire to know His power as He works His righteous judgment in your life. There should be present a constant reminder of who He is and who we are. There should be present an overwhelming peace in all circumstances, whether good or bad, happy or sad. There should be present a joy that comes from knowing God is working in your life to cause you to be more like His Son. Think about your fellowship with God. **How strong is your desire for Him? Do you turn to Him for answers?**

So how do we apply this verse? God has given us an example through David' s life of what our desire for Him should look like. **What do you need to do in response to the example we have been given?**

Application Questions

Read Proverbs 13:12. How does this verse relate to Psalm 119:20?

How would you describe your longing to know Christ?

What measures do you take to begin to satisfy this longing?

Read Psalm 42:1-2. What does it mean to pant for water? What happens when your thirst is not quenched? How does this picture relate to your desire to know God?

David says he desires to know God' s ordinances at all times. This means he is continually thirsty for the Truth. What is your prayer in connection with Psalm 119:20?

“A high value of the Lord' s commandment leads to a pressing desire to know and to do it, and this so weighs upon the soul that it is ready to break in pieces under the crush of its own longings.” *The Treasury of David*