

Psalm 119 – Session 3

Week 2, v.35-36

Last week we began our study with Psalm 119:33-34. David's request was that God teach him His commands and give him understanding to live out God's ways. We ended our study reading several verses that assured us that God will give us understanding, among them **Proverbs 2:6**.

Ps 119:34 Give me understanding, that I may observe Thy law, and keep it with all [my] heart.

What do we do when God is gracious enough to give us understanding? We use it! We keep it, we guard it, protect it, and preserve it! **In what manner do we do this?**

With our whole heart. Not just in conversation but with a loyalty towards Truth that leads to action. My whole heart means every fiber of my being – I think, eat and sleep with an awareness of God's commands. This means everything I do is touched by truth and regulated by truth.

I will not trifle with my God, I will not divide my affections with the world; God shall have all.
Adam Clarke's Commentary

Ps 119:10 With all my heart I have sought Thee; Do not let me wander from Thy commandments.

Php 1:9-11 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which [comes] through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

1Th 5:23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not only conscience, but will and affections, appetite and body. And you have given all to him for his use: Thomas Manton

We are not to seek this blessing that we may be famous for wisdom, but that we may be abundant in our love to the law of God. He who has understanding will learn, remember, treasure up, and obey the commandment of the Lord. The gospel gives us grace to keep the law; the free gift leads us to holy service; there is no way of reaching to holiness but by accepting the gift of God. If God gives, we keep; but we never keep the law in order to obtaining grace. The sure result of regeneration, or the bestowal of understanding, is a devout reverence for the law and a resolute keeping of it in the heart. The Spirit of God makes us to know the Lord and to understand somewhat of his love, wisdom, holiness, and majesty; and the result is that we honour the law and yield our hearts to the obedience of the faith. ... To observe God's law with all our heart at all times is a great grace, and few there be that find it; yet it is to be had if we will consent to be taught of the Lord. Treasury of David

The phrase, 'the whole heart 'are words David uses several times in this Psalm: 119:2; 10; 34; 58. **What does this repetition signify?** It emphasizes an idea or topic; usually the crucial elements of the idea. This concept is important!

An action point we can take from Ps 119:33-34. It is imperative to keep and protect God's statutes to the very end with every fiber of our being. We can do this because of His grace and work in our lives.

Ps 119:35 Make me walk in the path of Thy commandments, For I delight in it.

The desire spoken of is for God's guidance. That desire comes from a heart fully devoted to God's commands. **What is the result?** Delight!

Ps 119:16 I shall delight in Thy statutes; I shall not forget Thy word.

Ps 1:2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.

Ps 16:11 Thou wilt make known to me the path of life; In Thy presence is fulness of joy; In Thy right hand there are pleasures forever.

Previously, David had requested of God to teach him (Ps 119:33), then to give him understanding (Ps 119:34). Now, he requests of God to make his actions align with what he has been taught and understands – "make me do it!"

We are dependent on God for His teaching, His understanding and His work in our life to carry out His commands. **What does this truth say about us?** We are unable to bring anything to the table without His grace. Good works, done in our strength, no matter how sincere, do not meet the requirement of perfection that God demands. We can look good and do all sorts of nice things or even required things but without the understanding of our need for Christ's work on the cross those things are for naught. **Why is this important to understand?** When I try to add my own merit to attain something from God, I am in effect saying that Jesus' death was not enough; that the sacrifice of His son was incomplete and He needs me to help out. The good things we do are important but they are done out of thankfulness for what we have, not because we are earning God's accolades. Anything good I am able to do is not because I work hard at it or because I myself am a good person; it is only because I look to a great God and His work through His Son.

Php 2:13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for [His] good pleasure.

Eze 36:27 "And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

The phrase 'make me walk' (to go in KJV) <darak> means to tread; by implication, to walk; also to string a bow (by treading on it in bending): archer, bend, guide, lead.

Something interesting about stringing a bow is that you have to apply pressure to bend the bow in order to string it correctly so that it works. Remember, the natural tendency for humankind is to sin. We need to be changed, stretched, bent – use whatever choice of words you like – in order to follow the right path. God works in our lives to give us a bent towards His commands so that we are able to follow Him. Just as continuous tension is needed to

cause a bow to work properly, God's work in our lives is continuous as He molds us according to His will.

This is the cry of a child that longs to walk, but is too feeble; of a pilgrim who is exhausted, yet pants to be on the march; of a lame man who pines to be able to run. It is a blessed thing to delight in holiness, and surely he who gave us this delight will work in us the yet higher joy of possessing and practicing it. Here is our only hope; for we shall not go in the narrow path till we are made to do so by the Maker's own power. ... God worketh in us, but it is that we may both will and do according to his good pleasure. The holiness we seek after is not a forced compliance with command, but the indulgence of a whole hearted passion for goodness, such as shall conform our life to the will of the Lord. Can the reader say, "therein do I delight"? Is practical godliness the very jewel of your soul, the coveted prize of your mind? If so, the outward path of life, however rough, will be clean, and lead the soul upward to delight ineffable. He who delights in the law should not doubt but what he will be enabled to run in its ways, for where the heart already finds its joy the feet are sure to follow. *Treasury of David*

One way to measure what we take delight in is to look at where a majority of time is spent. **Do you desire to follow God's commands for your life? If so, are you taking steps to get to know who He is and what He expects of you?** We cannot walk in the path of God's commandments if we don't know them.

Ps 119:36 Incline my heart to Thy testimonies, and not to [dishonest] gain.

To incline means to stretch or to bend. Our natural tendency is to move away from God. In our sinful state we do not readily accept our need for God. Here, the prayer is that God would continually move us towards His ways.

Incline. Then shall I not decline. *James G. Murphy.*

Were we naturally and spontaneously inclined to the righteousness of the law, there would be no occasion for the petition of the Psalmist, "Incline my heart." It remains, therefore, that our hearts are full of sinful thoughts, and wholly rebellious until God by his grace change them. *John Calvin.*

Mt 15:8-9 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. 9 'BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.'

Eze 33:31 "And they come to you as people come, and sit before you [as] My people, and hear your words, but they do not do them, for they do the lustful desires [expressed] by their mouth, [and] their heart goes after their gain.

Ps 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Ps 141:4 Do not incline my heart to any evil thing, to practice deeds of wickedness with men who do iniquity; and do not let me eat of their delicacies.

1Ki 8:57-58 "May the LORD our God be with us, as He was with our fathers; may He not leave us or forsake us, that He may incline our hearts to Himself, to walk in all His ways and

to keep His commandments and His statutes and His ordinances, which He commanded our fathers.

Jer 32:39 and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own good, and for [the good of] their children after them.

Jer 24:7 'And I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the LORD; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart.

Eze 11:19 "And I shall give them one heart, and shall put a new spirit within them. And I shall take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances, and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God.

We are born with sin. We need renewed hearts. Because of God's grace, our heart is yielded to His commands. The desire to follow Him and love Him comes from Him. Without His grace in our lives we would naturally lean towards sin. **Can you identify those areas in your life where you really have to fight against doing what you want and what God wants?**

Psalm 119:36 speaks of dishonest gain. [KJV – covetousness]

What does it mean to covet something?

Covetousness <betsa> plunder, gain (usually unjust); (dishonest) gain, lucre, profit

When we plunder we get something illegally. Unjust gain means we benefit from the efforts of another.

Ver. 36. Covetousness is an immoderate desire of riches, in which these vices concur. First, An excessive love of riches, and the fixing of our hearts upon them. Secondly, a resolution to become rich, either by lawful or unlawful means, **1Ti 6:9**. Thirdly, Too much haste in gathering riches, joined with impatience of any delay, **Pr 28:20,22,21**. Fourthly, An insatiable appetite, which can never be satisfied; but when they have too much, they still desire more, and have never enough, **Ec 4:8**. Like the horseleech, **Pr 30:15**; the dropsy, and hell itself, **Pr 27:20**. Fifthly, Miser like tenacity, whereby they refuse to communicate their goods, either for the use of others, or themselves. Sixthly, Cruelty. **Pr 1:18-19**, exercised both in their unmercifulness and oppression of the poor. Covetousness is a most heinous vice; for it is idolatry, and the root of all evil, **Col 3:5**; **1Ti 6:10**; a pernicious thorn, that stifles all grace and chokes the seed of the word, **Mt 13:22**, and pierceth men through with many sorrows, **1Ti 6:10**, and drowns them in destruction and perdition. James Usher, 1580-1655.

Mr 7:21 "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries,

Ge 6:5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Lu 12:15 And He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not [even] when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions."

Heb 13:5 Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,"

S. Bonaventura, on our Psalm, says Covetousness must be hated, shunned, put away: must be hated, because it attacks the life of nature: must be shunned, because it hinders the life of grace: must be put away, because it obstructs the life of glory. Clemens Alexandrinus says that covetousness is the citadel of the vices, and Ambrose says that it is the loss of the soul.

Thomas Le Blanc.

There is a choice to make – God and His testimonies or the world and what it offers. The opposite of covetousness is contentment. When we are seeking to follow God, the desires for the world and its offerings are replaced by contentment in the truths of God.

De 31:6 "Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you."

1Ti 6:6 But godliness [actually] is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment.

Ps 37:16 Better is the little of the righteous Than the abundance of many wicked.

Pr 15:16 Better is a little with the fear of the LORD, than great treasure and turmoil with it.

Php 4:11 Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.

To be content means to be happy with what you have as opposed to wanting more. Socrates, a Greek philosopher, viewed contentment as the key to happiness. "He who is not contented with what he has, would not be contented with what he would like to have."

In Christ, we have everything we need!

Php 4:19 And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Ps 23:1 (A Psalm of David.) The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

2Co 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;

Ps 84:11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD gives grace and glory; No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.

Lu 12:30 "For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things. But seek for His kingdom, and these things shall be added to you.

Our hearts must have some object of desire, and the only way to keep out worldly gain is to put in its place the testimonies of the Lord. Treasury of David

Lu 16:13 "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

What is the cure for covetousness? Holiness!

God desires us to follow Him – it is His work in our lives. Therefore, as we draw close to Him, we will desire His testimonies rather than the world. When our heart is inclined toward God's truths, we will not lean towards dishonest practices.

Application Questions

Look back at Psalm 119:34. What does it mean to follow God's commands with all your heart?

Where else in Psalm 119 is the phrase 'all my heart' or 'whole heart' used? Why is this phrase repeated?

Psalm 119:35 says 'make me walk'. What is the difference between knowledge and action?

Read Philippians 2:13 and Ezekiel 36:27. What do these verses say about my need for God?

Read Psalm 119:36. What is the request that is made? Why is this request needed?

Look up Matthew 15:8-9; Ezekiel 33:31. What is said about our natural tendencies?

What can God do for His children according to the following scriptures?

Psalm 51:10

Jeremiah 32:39

Jeremiah 24:7

Ezekiel 11:19

In Psalm 119:36, what does dishonest gain mean?

What does God say about coveting? See Luke 12:15 and Hebrews 13:5.

Think about the things you have. Why do you have them? Who do you rely on to meet your needs? (Psalm 23:1; 2 Corinthians 9:8; Philippians 4:19)