



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 119 (Part 3)

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Introduction

- This is part 3 of Psalm 119 which includes the fifth and sixth sections of this Psalm
- **He** is the fifth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and it is used at the beginning of verbs in verses; 33-40
- So, the first word in each verse begins with the letter *he*
- This section (verse 33-40) is a series of prayers for instruction guidance and strength
- The prayers in this section have the meaning, “Cause me to learn,” “Cause me to understand,” “Cause me to walk” and so forth



Introduction

- To desire God, God's ways, and God's words, according to the Psalm, includes both positive and negative longings
- Positively, the life of faith means to learn to desire to seek God and God's ways through God's Word
- It means to delight in studying God's Word and to seek understanding and knowledge there
- Negatively, the life of faith means turning away from other desires — the desire for selfish gain (verse 36), from vain pursuits (verse 37), from those things which only bring disgrace (verse 39)



Introduction

- Verses 41-48 is the sixth part of the Psalm, in which each verse begins with the letter Vau
- The psalmist in these verses gave several reasons for why he loved God's Word and would cling to it
- God's Word brings us His lovingkindness, mercies, and salvation
- The eight verses are one continued pleading for the abiding of grace in his soul



Introduction

General Outline

- He: Prayers for God's Word 119:33-40
- Vau: Applying God's Word for His Glory 119:41-48

Prayers for God's Word

119:33-40



- The psalmist here stresses his great desire to keep the *way* and word of God
- If God would teach him, he would persevere and *keep the way to the end*
- This is the main prayer of the Psalm - a prayer for spiritual enlightenment
- It occurs eight times (verses 12, 26, 33, 64, 68, 108, 124, and 135)
- But why does the psalmist seek from the Lord to teach him the way of His statutes?
- Is not the law that was given by God to Moses enough for him?

Prayers for God's Word

119:33-40



- He prays for a personal leadership by God
- He prays for guidance in observing the commandment
- Man is unable, by himself, to keep the way and word of God, much less *keep it to the end*
- Philippians 2:13 tells us that it is “*God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*”
- Here the psalmist prays as one who has received the *will*, and now prays for the *doing* of it
- *Teach me* to practice and apply them
- He desires to be taught *the way* of applying them to himself

Prayers for God's Word

119:33-40



- St. Augustine asks, “Why does this man still pray for a law to be laid down for him... As, if you hold a full cup, and gives it to a thirsty man; he both exhausts it by drinking it, and prays for it by still longing for it.”
- He is not asking God to personally instruct him in the Scriptures so that he can find something new and exciting or so that he can expand his theological understanding
- The reason or goal of the instruction is so that he will obey it
- He comes to the Holy Bible with a humble attitude – *Lord, Teach me* – and a submissive goal – *Lord, I shall keep it to the end*

Prayers for God's Word

119:33-40



- After having asked for a desire to learn the way of the law, he also asks for understanding; that he may rightly comprehend it, so that he may *observe it with my whole heart*
- Without this understanding, the psalmist could not follow the desire of his transformed heart
- We need *understanding* to persevere in the faith
- And to *understand* is also to discern
- The *heart* is the seat of decision, desire, choice, and will
- *with my whole heart*, Doing the will of God from the heart, and with a good will and utterly, as to the Lord, and not to men

Prayers for God's Word

119:33-40



- St. Augustine comments on *with my whole heart*, and says, “For when each man has searched the law, and searched its deep things, in which its whole meaning does consist; he ought indeed to love God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind; and his neighbor as himself.”
- The psalmist now, in verse 35 for the third time, asks for grace to observe the law, *Make me walk in the path of Your commandments*
- Despite his *delight* and desire for God's word, the Psalmist knows he cannot *walk* in God's *path* without God's empowering

Prayers for God's Word

119:33-40



- It is an acknowledgment of his dependence on God, that he might be able to carry out the good purposes of his soul
- According to St. Augustine his desire is powerless, unless God Himself makes one to go where he desires
- The psalmist proclaims his true desire for a holy life, and his readiness to work, yet he cannot start the way, nor walk in it, without the grace of God
- The Apostle Paul cries out, saying: *“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.”* (Romans 7:18)
- The used the word *path* because the way is narrow which leads to life

Prayers for God's Word

119:33-40



- The psalmist knows that he has to rely on God, "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.*" (Proverbs 3:5)
- The psalmist rightly understood that *covetousness* was a threat to walking in God's way
- The psalmist recognizes that the right inclination of the heart, is itself the gift of God
- A heart inclined toward God's word would help him be satisfied in what God provides

Prayers for God's Word

119:33-40



- Balaam sold out God's people and his own soul because he coveted (Numbers 22; 2 Peter 2:14-16)
- *Covetousness*, Is a sin which stands opposite to all God's testimonies, *"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."* (1 Timothy 6:10)
- St. Augustine says, "If therefore our heart be not inclined to covetousness, we fear God only for God's sake, so that He is the only reward of our serving Him."

Prayers for God's Word

119:33-40



- The psalmist is praying that God let him not be distracted from His service by the vanities of the world, *worthless things*, like wealth, honor, power, glory, and the like
- He prayed that God would empower and enable him to *turn away* his *eyes* and attention from such things
- Rather, *revive me in Your way*, give him long life, strength, and vitality, to walk continually in the way of His commandments
- The psalmist understood that he had a natural tendency toward *worthless things*, so he prayed for that natural tendency not to be
- *revive me*, This is another prayer for revival – this time, to be made alive again in the *way* (or path) of God

Prayers for God's Word

119:33-40



- The psalmist wanted to walk in God's way, and to do it with a revived heart
- He prayed for detachment or deadness in one direction – toward *worthless things* – and for life in another direction – toward God's way
- *Establish Your word*, This is not a prayer for God to change His word in some way; indeed, the word of the Lord is established forever (Isaiah 40:8)
- This is a prayer for a change in the heart and mind of the *servant* of God, so that the word of the Lord would be established in him

Prayers for God's Word

119:33-40



- This is a request for God to confirm His promise; to establish as true what He has already said to His servant because it is His promise that produces a healthy and holy fear of Him
- *“The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge.”* (Proverbs 1:7) and *“the conclusion of the whole matter”* (Ecclesiastes 12:13)
- This request is for God to confirm what He has already said
- This is a request for God to act in accordance with His own Word
- Those who are truly God's servants, though they have their weaknesses and difficulties, are sincerely *devoted to the fearing* God and have all their life ruled by that fear

Prayers for God's Word

119:33-40



- While declaring the goodness of God's judgments, the psalmist also prayed that his *reproach* would be turned away by the merciful God
- There is some *reproach* that we face as faithful followers of Jesus
- Paul suffered these kind of reproaches (1 Timothy 4:10) and indeed even took pleasure in them (2 Corinthians 12:10)
- We expect and receive *reproach* as followers of Jesus (Hebrews 13:13; 1 Peter 4:14)
- But the psalmist here seeks from God to take away from him the reproach of sin

Prayers for God's Word

119:33-40



- Some think that David has some reference to his sins, in the case of Uriah and Bathsheba; lest they should be a continuous reproach on his name and family, which he greatly feared
- *Your judgments are good*, The Word of God is, “*Sweeter* than honey to my mouth! (Psalm 119:103)
- God’s judgments, decrees, declarations, and decisions are *good*
- God only creates *good* things (Genesis 1:31) and he only gives *good* gifts (James 1:17)
- “*Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good*” (Psalm 34:8)
- One can only assume that His decisions would also and only be *good*

Prayers for God's Word

119:33-40



- Again, the Psalmist prays for revival in verse 40
- The prayer comes from a heart that loves God's word, *Your precepts*, asking to be made alive in the *righteousness* of God
- This is a prayer of hope; hope in God and in the power of His life changing Word
- This longing only comes as a result of God's action combined with humble submission
- He has requested that God instruct, make him discern, and obey His Word while at the same time humbly submitting to and endeavoring to obey

Prayers for God's Word

119:33-40



- He has requested that God change his feelings away from sin and turn them toward God
- Then, and only then, he may request God's divine blessing
- St. Augustine says, "fill me with that love which I have longed for. Aid me that I may do that which You charge me ... '*Revive me in Your righteousness.*' for in myself I had that which would cause my death."

Applying God's Word for His Glory 119:41-48



- From the longing of God's step-by-step- instructions and the request for life (v. 40) comes this prayer for *mercies* and *salvation* of God
- He is praying that God's mercies be manifested to him; to experience His mercy and favor
- The Psalmist desired *mercies* and *salvation* to be remembered, shown, communicated, and applied to him
- He needed many mercies, so the request is in the plural
- According to the promises of God's word
- The Psalmist was relying on the promise of God

Applying God's Word for His Glory 119:41-48



- This is not a prayer that is offered in wishful thinking
- The psalmist prays in perfect accordance with what God has already promised
- God's Word was promised, that He would grant mercy and salvation to all His faithful servants (Deuteronomy 28:1-13)
- Our salvation must be attributed purely to God's mercy, and not to any merit of our own
- We are not only allowed to trust in God's word, but our trusting in it is the condition of our benefit by it
- According to the scholar Origen, once God covers His people with His mercies, they will enjoy His salvation

Applying God's Word for His Glory 119:41-48



- And according to St. Augustine, mercy and salvation are referred to our Lord Jesus Christ, who, because of the abundance of His mercies, He came incarnate, to give salvation to mankind
- Personal experience of God's manifold *mercies* manifested in His deliverance will enable the psalmist to return a conclusive answer to those who mock him with the uselessness of serving God
- When he reproached it will be enough to pronounce God's promise

Applying God's Word for His Glory 119:41-48



- When the mercies and salvation of God came unto him, a ready answer might be given to those who ask where is his God, in whom he trusted and where is the promise of salvation, on which he depended
- Trust in God's word provides an answer to those who reproach us
- *Your word*, May mean Christ the Word, Who Is our trust and confidence; or it may mean the written word
- St. Augustine says, "They to whom Christ crucified is a stumbling-block or foolishness, reproach us with Him; ignorant that 'the Word was made flesh, and dwelt in us;' ... let us not be terrified or confounded by their reproaches."

Applying God's Word for His Glory 119:41-48



- The psalmist is praying that God does not take *the word of truth* entirely or altogether from him
- He is asking that God does not remove the pleasure, privilege, and ability to speak *the word of truth*
- In support of this request, he quickly adds *For I have hoped in Your ordinances*
- The psalmist desires *the word of truth* might be kept in his mouth
- This request is rooted in the understanding that it is only by the goodness and grace of God that His word does dwell with him

Applying God's Word for His Glory 119:41-48



- Therefore, the prayer comes that it may continue so
- He is asking to have the wisdom and courage which are necessary to enable him to use his knowledge for the instruction of others so he may never be afraid or ashamed of the truth and ways of God, nor deny Him before men
- Or, he may mean to ask not to be utterly hopeless; or without some evidence that God's word dwells in him with sustaining and sanctifying power
- He might have prayed that when his mind was troubled and in doubt, and when it seemed as if all hope and all trust in the truth of God would vanish

Applying God's Word for His Glory 119:41-48



- *For I have hoped in Your ordinances*, His past hope is the ground for his future expectation
- He has *hoped* in the word of God *ordinances* in the past, and he has not been disappointed
- The psalmist wanted God's word to remain in his *mouth* so that he could *keep* God's *law Forever and ever*
- This was to glorify God through obedience to His word, not for any self-serving purpose
- It is a declaration of devotion to obey the law of God *forever*
- The believer who actually *hopes* in God's Word, is the believer who continually obeys it

Applying God's Word for His Glory 119:41-48



- Having just spoken of the obedience that comes from having God's word within, the psalmist now testifies that this obedience brings a life of *liberty*
- Freedom comes through obedience and submission to God
- Disobedience, rejection of God's word, and reliance upon one's own wisdom leads to bondage
- He would not be restrained by evil passions and corrupt desires
- He *will walk at liberty*, even if he is afflicted; as it is written: "*We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed;*" (2 Corinthians 4:8)

Applying God's Word for His Glory 119:41-48



- Verse 46 is an example of the *liberty* just mentioned
- To have the boldness and ability to speak freely of God and His great word before *kings* shows true *liberty*
- With freedom comes courage
- Like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, or Nehemiah, or the martyrs, he is ready, if need be, to confess his faith boldly before the highest human authorities
- According to the scholar Origen, he who does not speak the word of good news with courage, would be speaking with shame
- *I will delight*, shows that delighting in God's word is a choice, a matter of the will

Applying God's Word for His Glory 119:41-48



- These last two verses turn from the external manifestations of a life that waits for God's judgments to the internal attitude and desires that hope for God's decrees
- The psalmist expresses delight in the commands of God because he *loves* them
- The psalmist lists at least three things that come from this life of obedience: *liberty*, confidence, *will not be ashamed*, and *delight*
- These are blessings of the obedient life – blessings enjoyed by those who will keep God's law continually
- Obedience results from love, "*If you love Me, keep My commandments*" (John 14:15)

Applying God's Word for His Glory 119:41-48



- The psalmist love the commands of God and delight and rush to obey them
- He rushes to *lift up his hands* in surrender and praise to these same commandments
- The attitude of prayer, significant of an uplifted heart (Psalm 28:2)
- He is ready, willing, and eager to obey the commandments that reflect the character of the God he loves
- Obedience begins in the head, by willing it, invades the heart, and proceeds out of the hands

Applying God's Word for His Glory 119:41-48



- This last verse expresses the strength and the depth of the psalmist's love for God's word
- That love is manifested not only in the feeling of *delight*, but also in an act of honor, *My hands also I will lift up to Your commandments*, and time and energy spent with God's word, *I will meditate*
- St. Augustine says, "he loved, both in thought and in acts. With a view to thought, he says, 'And I meditated:' as to action, 'My hands also have I lifted up.'"



Discussion

- What should our response be to God's teaching? What does it mean "keep it to the end"?
- How can one keep His law? What does it mean to keep it with all of heart?
- What does it mean for the heart to be inclined towards His testimonies?
- What does it mean to be revived in His ways?



Discussion

- Why is it important that the Psalmist identifies himself as God's servant?
- Why does God's righteousness revive?
- How would His word silence opposition?
- What is indicated about God's character when he says, "hoped in Your ordinances"?



Discussion

- Why should one keep His law continuously? And how?
- What does it mean to “walk in liberty”
- What does it mean to “lift up my hands to Your commandments”?
- Why do you think it emphasizes the need to love His word in the last 2 verses?