

A PRAYER FOR A GODLY LIFE

Psalm 119:33-40

Intro: Psalm 119 is a Psalm of the Word, as we can readily see by reading it and by noticing the many different words which are used to describe the Word. But it is also a Prayer Psalm. One unique thing about the fifth stanza is that *every verse contains at least one request, and two of the verses (36 and 37) contain two requests each.* We have not had this in any of the first four stanzas.

From the beginning of the Psalm, the Psalmist (probably David) has shown how his heart has been attracted to the Word. But in this stanza his attraction is intense. And that is indicated by the many requests that he gave here.

We learn from this stanza that we should not hesitate to repeat requests, and also, although we must exercise care in doing this, we should be inclined to promise the Lord what we will do if He answers our requests. In OT language this was called making a vow to the Lord. But even here we see that David was conscious that only with the Lord's quickening power would he be able to obey the Word. We see this in verses 35, 36, 37, 39 and 40.

The request with which this stanza of Psalm 119 begins is found also in verses 12, 26, 64, 68, 124, and 135.

Notice the requests in this stanza:

- 1) "Teach me" (v. 33). Cf. vv. 12, 26 for the same request.
- 2) "Give me" (v. 34).
- 3) "Make me" (v. 35). Cf. v. 27.
- 4) "Incline my heart," which is the same as saying, *Incline me* (v. 36).
- 5) "Turn away mine eyes" (v. 37); "quicken . . . me" (v. 37). Cf. vv. 25, 40, 88, 107, 149, 154, 156, 159.
- 6) "Stablish thy word" (v. 38).
- 7) "Turn away my reproach" (v. 39). See vv. 22, 37.
- 8) "Quicken me" (v. 40) – a repeat from verse 37.

In verse 33 we see several things in David's request. He wanted to be taught. He wanted the Lord to teach him. And he wanted to be taught the Word, actually, "the way of thy statutes." Many people have a great desire to learn. You can see this by the way people go on for further

schooling after high school, and many on to graduate schools. We see this by the amazing market there is for books and magazines. But our desire to learn can often lead us in the wrong direction. Even those who have a legitimate desire to learn a trade, or to pursue a career, or to develop special talents, such as in music, or science, or art, have no desire at all for the Word. But David wanted to understand the Word. He had others who could teach him, such as priests, prophets, and other wise men, but he appealed directly to the Lord in this case.

However, David did not ask the Lord to teach him with the idea that he would decide later about what to do with the teaching, but he promised the Lord with his request that he would not only “keep it,” but that he would “keep it unto the end, that is, for the rest of his life. Often our Bible reading and Bible study, and even hearing the Word taught and proclaimed is not profitable because the Lord knows that we are not serious about living according to the Word.

Notice in verse 34 for that he repeated his promise of verse 33, but added, “yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.” He wanted to know the Word because he loved it and because he obviously wanted to live a godly life, a life that was pleasing to the Lord.

But when we come to verse 35 we see that David realized that he could not follow through on his promises, as much as he loved the Word, unless the Lord constrained him in his obedience. He knew the truth of Phil. 2:12 and 13.

The word “incline” in verse 36 is an interesting word. It speaks of stretching something out toward something else, or reaching out toward it. Our hearts are always inclined toward something, often things that are not only not good, but often harmful to us. David wanted the Lord to stretch his heart out to the Lord’s “testimonies,” the word which speaks of Scripture as being very clear concerning God’s testimony as to the high standards of godly living as well as warning against things which could hinder us in our desire to please God. It is either the Word, which speaks of God’s will, or the alternative is covetousness, which speaks of what we want, or what we want to do. Covetous means putting something else in the place which the Lord should have. He did not want his heart to be stretched out in accordance with the selfish and often evil desires of his own heart.

And then in verse 37 David prayed concerning another danger, beholding vanity. What did he mean by “vanity”? It is an illusion. To behold vanity is to look at things which appear to be what they are not. David wanted the Lord to keep his eyes from going on a sight-seeing excursion. He wasn’t talking about the kind of tours you can take when you go to another city, but he was talking about the careless use of the eyes.

Let me give you three illustrations from Scripture:

- 1) Eve in Gen. 3:6.
- 2) Achan in Joshua 7:20 and 21.
- 3) David in 2 Sam. 11:2-4.

Sin usually is associated with the way we use our eyes.

Matthew Henry related verse 37 with Mark 4:18 and 19, when the Word was sown among thorns.

To void such a danger David asked that he might be quickened, that is, strengthened inwardly by the power of God. And that power is always displayed through the Word.

Verse 38 is another very important Word. God has made many promises in His Word. David was asking the Lord to stand by those promises. This was his security. And David said that he was devoted to the fear of God. This is one of the most important terms in all of Scripture. It does not mean that if we are God-fearing that we live in fear of what God might do to us, but that we fear lest we do that which would grieve and displease Him. Like the song we sing, “In the sweet fear of Jesus . . .”

But there is often a price to pay if we are to live to please God in this world. In verse 39 David was comparing the “reproach” that would come to him from the world, with the “judgments” of God, that which is right before God as compared with that which is sinful in his sight. Cf. abortion, homo-sexual activity, etc. The ways of God and the ways of men are always opposed to each other. David asked the Lord to “turn away” the reproach, not that he could escape it altogether, but that evil men would not be able to carry through with the evil designs against the man of God.

The stanza ends with David telling how he had “longed after” God’s “precepts.” One emphasis in this word is God’s concern about details in all that he has commanded or forbidden. David was saying here that the

longing of his heart was to be found always doing that which was right in God's sight. But the only way he could do it was, again, through the quickening, strengthening power of the Lord. As Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

Concl: How much of this stanza can you and I honestly pray before the Lord? It is here not just to show us how the psalmist felt about his relationship with the Lord, but as a pattern, an example, for us to follow. This was the Psalmist's prayer that the Lord would enable him to live a godly life.