

IN LOVE WITH THE WORD

Psalm 119:96-104

Intro: After all that the psalmist has had to say about the Scriptures, it is not surprising that he has reached this point in his attitude toward the law of God. “Love” combines and characterizes all that he could say about God’s word. He loves to read it. He loves to think about it. He loves to talk about it. He loves to memorize it. Anything that you can do with the Word of God, He loves to do it.

When a man falls in love with a lady, and vice versa, he wants to spend all of the time with her that he possibly can. When he leaves her, he counts the days or the hours until he can be with her again. And all of the time he is away from her, he is thinking about her. He may have other very important things to do, but he can’t get her out of his mind. And he doesn’t try to.

This is the way that the psalmist felt about the Law of God. Kidner tells us that this word “law” is used of the Scriptures more than any other term. It speaks of the authority of the word of God, but it also is a word which speaks of all of divine revelation. But it emphasizes that God’s purpose in giving His Word, was not only to reveal truth that could not be known any other way, but to emphasize the importance of obedience, bringing our lives into conformity with the Scriptures.

Now we need to note how unusual it is for anyone to express any kind of affection toward the Word of God because by nature we don’t love it. We are not even interested in finding out what it has to say. And we also have an aversion to having anyone tell us what to believe, or what we must do, or what we must not do. So this has to be the statement of one who knows and loves the Lord, one who has truly experienced the saving grace of God. The nature man is capable of loving many things, often the wrong things, but not God’s Word. And so God has brought about an amazing change in the psalmist’s heart toward the Word. Obviously, one reason the psalmist loves the Word as he does, is because the Scriptures teach him about God. The parent verb of the word “law” means to teach or to direct (Kidner).

Barnes bring out the fact that this statement about the Word of God expressed the psalmist’s amazement that he felt like he did about the Scriptures. The word “how” indicates that he is at a loss to express how

much he loves the Word of God. It is a depth of love and a fervency which he lacks words to adequately explain how he really feels about the Word.

And note that he was expressing how he presently felt about the Word: “O how love I thy law.” It is not that he once loved it, but his love presently was not what it used to be. Nor that he knew that he ought to love it, but could not say that he did. It is all a present feeling which he had experienced for some time, and which he expected he would continue to experience in the days to ahead.

So, consistent with true love (and also in the present), “it is my meditation all the day long.” This means that his mind was always going back to the Word. It means that he deliberately took time to think about the Word, special times which he set aside for the purpose of thinking about the Word, trying to understand it better, and seeking to know how the truth of the Word should be applied to his life.

But as we go on to verse 2 we see that as much time as he had devoted on a daily basis to the Word of God, he recognized that it was the Lord who had given him this love and it was the Lord Who had produced the benefits that he had experienced in his life. And he mentioned five:

- 1) Toward his enemies, he was wiser (v. 98).
- 2) Toward his teachers (v. 99).
- 3) Toward the ancients (v. 100).
- 4) It had kept him from sin (v. 101).
- 5) Its judgments had directed the way he lived (v. 102). And at this last point he mentions again that it was the Lord who had been his Teacher.

And then in v. 103 he expresses how delightful all of this has been to him. And finally in v. 104 he tells how in submitting his life to the authority of the Word, he had come to “hate every false way.”

This stanza is an excellent illustration of the first nine chapters of Proverbs where Solomon emphasized to his son (or sons) how very important it is to pursue the wisdom of God, and to seek for the understanding that can come to us through the Word.

It is interesting to note the order in which the psalmist mentioned, first, his enemies, then his teachers, and finally those who were older than he was, and perhaps he was also referring to the wisdom of those who had

lived before him, and whose authority was recognized by most people.

Look again at verse 98. Solomon mentioned to his son both wicked men and wicked women. The Devil is our chief enemy, and the only place that he is truly exposed is in the Word of God. We learn from our Lord's temptation how to stand against the Devil. Ephesians 6 is a chapter that the psalmist did not have, but we have it, and it is invaluable in thinking of how we can be victorious over the Devil. The Devil and his emissaries set traps for us all of the time. But to be wiser than our enemies (and we all have them), is to be victorious over them.

What about our teachers? He did not mean that all that he had been taught had been wrong (although we have to exercise a continual guard in connection with what we are being taught). But he meant that having their teaching, but continuing to meditate in the Word, the Lord had taken him beyond his teaching.

In verse 100 the psalmist wants us to recognize that an old man, or someone who has lived in the past, is not necessarily a wise person. It is the Word which gives us discernment, which gives us understanding. And that which keeps our hearts open for the truth is that we practice the truth of the Word of God as far as we have been taught.

In verse 101 the psalmist continues with the thought of obedience which he had mentioned at the end of verse 100. He had learned that if he were to keep the Word of God, there were things which he had done which he could not continue to do. So he was describing a process that was going on in his heart from day to day as he read, or listened to, the Word of God. He always had in his heart the realization that he must never stop learning, never stop applying the Word, but that he must continue to grow in a life that must be increasingly pleasing to God.

Verse 102 means that he had found the guidance that he had received from the Word of God completely reliable. He was firmly convinced that what God had taught him, what he had learned from the Word, was absolute truth.

Now we come to a result in verse 103. The love that he had for the Word of God did not come to him in a moment of time as a special blessing from the Lord, but it was the result of the way he had continued to read on the Word, to meditate on it, to pray over it, and to apply it to his own life.

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Going through all of this, he tells us how sweet the Word of God was to him.

The point is that it takes time for any of us to get to the place where we really love the Word of God the way the psalmist did. He did not get there overnight. He began by reading. He continued by meditation. He gave attention to applying the Word to his life, always remembering that only the Lord could teach him, and only the Lord could make the Word fruitful in his life.

The last verse gives us a good way to test whether or not we really love the Word of God. If we can honestly say verse 97, then we are also going to be able to say what the psalmist said in verse 104. If we love the Word, we are also going to “hate every false way.”

Remember what we learned in Psa. 119:11.