

July 21, 2024

“Delightful Precepts”  
Lesson 3

Psalm 119:73-80

### **Intro**

Psalm 119 is one of the longest chapters in the Bible, spanning 176 verses in groups of 8 verses. This is because the author used an acrostic writing style, with each new section beginning with another letter of the Hebrew alphabet, 22 letters in total. This style can also be seen in Ps. 37, 111, and 112, and in Lamentations chapters 1-4. The Psalm focuses on the Law of Moses (commands, laws, precepts, decrees, etc), and the faithful person’s response to following God’s Law (delight, comfort, etc). The section we look at today portrays God as the teacher and the praying person as a student in the school of life. The essential teaching is the Law presented not just as a set of arbitrary rules, but as a window into the meaning of life.

### **Read Psalm 119:73-80**

1. vs. 73: Though God is not human, he is frequently described in human terms
  - This allows writers to express what God is like, though language can’t do it accurately
  - This verse describes God as the Creator, creating all of humanity
  - God created all in Genesis, and He continues creating each individual
  - Since God is the source of life, it makes sense to ask Him for understanding
  - The psalmist asks for God’s help to grow in knowledge, especially about His precepts
  - Understanding the connection between what it says and its value takes a lifetime
  
2. vs. 74: The writer presents a group who share his confidence in God’s promises
  - These people fear God, and rejoice when they encounter another who feels the same way
  - What they are rejoicing about is God’s words, not in themselves or other knowledge
  - These people see God’s world as potentially good, not totally evil, being based on God
  - This allows them to find life meaningful, and to rejoice with like-minded people
  
3. vs. 75: This verse describes God’s laws as “righteous”
  - The word righteous is synonymous with the word “just”
  - God’s instructions for man create the conditions needed for human thriving
  - One of these conditions is a commitment to just dealings with all people
  - The second phrase connects God’s righteous judgment with “faithfulness”
    - If God did not judge sin, He would be unfaithful to His character and word
  - The word “afflicted” here carries the sense of being humbled, not of being attacked
  - A humble person accepts suffering as an opportunity for learning
    - A good teacher allows his students to struggle sometimes in their learning
    - A good student recognizes adversity as a chance to learn and grow
  
4. vs. 76: This verse shows the psalmists great confidence in his relationship with God
  - He says that God’s love is unailing; it takes time to see this action repeated
    - The phrase “covenant loyalty” can be used to explain God’s unailing love
    - This is based on God’s promises and people’s acceptance of those promises
    - One of those promises is that God will comfort/console His people in their suffering

The heavenly teacher provides support when the lesson is the hardest to learn  
The person of faith can count on God's favor and promises to deliver

5. vs. 77: The psalmist asks for compassion that he might live

Without God's compassion/mercy, no one can survive, much less thrive

The basis for the prayer in the first half of the verse is confidence in God answering it

The basis is the "delight" or "pleasure" the psalmist has in God's word

People can and should take delight in God's words for many reasons

They preserve life

They protect from various enemies

They provide stability

The person who pursues life in and with God will experience joy, even amidst trials

God's words are a burden to be endured; they allow a deeply meaningful life

6. vs. 78: God's instructions provide a different mindset and life pattern than that of a nonbeliever

Some nonbelievers attack those who are seeking to live righteously

To wrong someone "without cause" may be something like lying or slandering

If all chose to follow God's laws, there would be less evil

But who choose God's path can learn to reject unjust words and actions

Even in times of trouble, they can live a centered, joyful, meaningful life

7. vs. 79: This verse is similar in tone and idea to verse 74

Both show that the psalmist is living a life centered on God's laws and faithfulness

Both show a group following him in this way of life

Those who gladly hear him are living in right "fear" of God

This is the correct stance toward God, based on correct knowledge

They "understand your statutes"

8. vs. 80: This section ends with a prayer for help in learning and application of God's laws

The writer wants especially to have the right attitudes of his heart toward God

The attitude matters as much as the thinking or the learning

He closes by saying that he does not want "to be put to shame"

This could be shame and humiliation socially for not following what God says

It could be shame before God for not living the life God has prescribed

Rather, the person who follows God's decrees joins a great number of like-minded people  
from across the ages

Application: These verses speak of the existence of a faithful community of like-minded people. They trusted each other and worked toward building a better world that expects goodness from its Creator. They did this partly by fostering a life of celebration. They did not ignore or pretend away the negative aspects of life, but rather saw something more behind them. Their attitudes and actions hopefully inspire us to live similarly, in a faith-based community celebrating our Creator.

Prayer: Almighty God, you have made us and continue to shape us into the image of Christ. Help us to understand your actions, your care for all things, your love for us and your desire that we grow in wisdom. In Jesus' name, Amen.