

Delightful Precepts

Darius looked around at the other five men in Nolan's living room. If you had told him a year ago that he would be sitting with five other men on a Friday night enjoying a Bible study, he wouldn't have believed it.

Darius was loving living a life for the Lord, and he enjoyed learning the Word of God. He was thankful that he finally heeded God's voice and came to Christ. He just hated that his mother wasn't alive to see it.

The 30-year-old's old life had been one full of material trappings, fun times, a good posse, and attractive women. Now, his world had changed, and he loved the things of God! But there was so much he didn't know and understand. He remembered his mother talking about God, but it all seemed like a foreign language to him.

It didn't anymore, thanks to the Holy Spirit. Learning about God's ways and following the Lord was not a hardship, he had told his old friend, Ahmand. Darius wanted to please God, which meant keeping His commandments. They were not like the laws and regulations of the world.

Tonight, they were studying 1 John. Darius had a question about 1 John 3:6, because he had certainly sinned and made mistakes since knowing the Lord.

"Good question, Brother Darius," said Nolan. "I'm happy you've been so faithful to our men's study. I also appreciate your love for the Word."

1. *What is your general attitude toward the world's rules and regulations?*

2. *What do you perceive are the differences between the world's rules and regulations and the commandments of God?*

3. *How do the commandments of God indicate who God is and how He feels about us?*

Commands of Our Creator God

Psalm 119:73-74, KJV

73 Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.

74 They that fear thee will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in thy word.

Psalm 119:73-74, NIV

⁷³Your hands made me and formed me; give me understanding to learn your commands.

⁷⁴May those who fear you rejoice when they see me, for I have put my hope in your word.

Our text begins with the psalmist acknowledging a foundational truth: Our God is our Creator. He created the heavens, the earth, and everything therein, including people. As David proclaimed of the Lord, “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well” (Ps. 139:13-14). When we behold the beauty of the night sky, we can see how clearly it declares the glory of the Lord (Ps. 19:1). And the same is true when we look upon a newborn baby.

Along with marveling at the glories of our Creator, we can trust that He wants to communicate with us, as well. Over millennia, God has given His Word, the Old and New Testaments, to teach us how to have a relationship with Him and help us to understand how to please Him by keeping His commands. And, He has given us His Spirit to guide us in that understanding.

Furthermore, we can know that there is great reason to rejoice for those who fear the Lord and put their hope in His Word. It is strange to think of fear as a companion of rejoicing and hope, but such is the case when our fear is in the Lord. When we truly consider from His Word how mighty and majestic God is, we rightly understand how feeble we are in comparison. And that knowledge gives us hope that, no matter the circumstance or trial, God is more

than able to see us through it.

4. *What did the psalmist first acknowledge about the Lord?*

5. *Why did the psalmist want understanding?*

6. *According to this passage, in what should we put our hope?*

Commands of Our Compassionate God

Psalm 119:75-77, KJV

75 I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.

76 Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.

77 Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight.

Psalm 119:75-77, NIV

⁷⁵I know, LORD, that your laws are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me.

⁷⁶May your unfailing love be my comfort, according to your promise to your servant.

⁷⁷Let your compassion come to me that I may live, for your law is my delight.

It takes spiritual maturity to appreciate afflictions that God allows into our lives. Most people do not normally ask to be “afflicted” (vs. 75), but the wise person will recognize the value of it for good. The Hebrew for “afflicted,” also conveys the idea of chastisement or humbling. And though it may seem harsh for a time, there is also a gentle aspect about it. In other words, affliction or chastisement from God is not out of anger or wrath, but rather from the heart of a loving Father. As Proverbs 3:11–12 admonishes, “My son, do not despise the LORD’s discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.”

We too can accept afflictions from the Lord, not only because of His love, but also because we know His laws

and commands are truly “righteous” (vs. 75). Our God deals with us rightly; and when we follow His commands, we will stay on His righteous path. Furthermore, we can take comfort in His unfailing mercy and kindness toward us. And most comforting of all is the knowledge that God keeps His promises, for it is not possible for God to lie.

Additionally, we can find “compassion” (vs. 77) and life in God’s tender mercy and His Word. Jesus said, “Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life” (John 5:24). Likewise, Paul referred to the need to hold fast to the word of life (Phil. 2:16). No wonder the psalmist spoke of delighting in God’s law, His Word, for by His mercy it is our very life.

7. *What can we know about the affliction God brings into our lives?*

8. *In what can we find comfort?*

9. *In what are we to delight and why?*

Commands of Our Caring God

Psalm 119:78-80, KJV

78 Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: but I will meditate in thy precepts.

79 Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies.

80 Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed.

Psalm 119:78-80, NIV

⁷⁸May the arrogant be put to shame
for wronging me without cause;
but I will meditate on your precepts.

⁷⁹May those who fear you turn to me,
those who understand your statutes.

⁸⁰May I wholeheartedly follow your decrees,
that I may not be put to shame.

God cares when others in pride and arrogance mistreat His people, and we can be sure that He will deal with them effectively and justly. In fact, how others treat the

Lord's people will be a primary consideration when He returns in judgment. Feeding, clothing, and otherwise ministering to the Lord's people are indicators of righteousness, and failure to do so indicates just the opposite (see Matt. 25:31-46). In God's sovereign time, evil people who treat others with contempt will not escape shame and judgment. There is nothing hidden from God's attention.

In stark contrast to the perverse, arrogant person, when God's people "meditate" (vs. 78) on His precepts, holy fear and reverence will come upon them; and they will seek to do His will. And key to doing God's will is to "understand" (vs. 79) it. Godly fear and true understanding of the Lord's statutes go hand in hand. To have a right view of God's Word, we need to have a right view of God Himself. When we have a right view of God, we will present ourselves to Him as living, holy, and acceptable sacrifices, not conformed to this evil age, but transformed with minds renewed by the Word and Spirit (see Rom. 12:1-2).

Another key to standing unashamed before the Lord is "wholeheartedly" (vs. 80) following His decrees. The idea here is having a heart that is strong and sound for the Lord. It speaks of a pure, stout heart for the things and ways of God. When we approach decrees and statutes with a whole heart that is pure in His eyes, we will have no reason to be ashamed. When we consider God's faithfulness and unfailing love for us, how could we do anything but delight in His commands? There is joy in keeping and heeding the Word of God, for it gives life to those who respond to it in faith.

10. *According to this passage, how does a prideful person treat others?*

11. *What does it take to know and understand God's testimonies and statutes?*

12. *What assurance do we have when we wholeheartedly follow God's commands?*

Knowing God

Henry T. Blackaby, pastor and author of the best-selling *Experiencing God* books, famously said, “God’s commands are designed to guide you to life’s very best.” With such a divine intention for us, what else can we do but delight in God’s commands, knowing that His unfailing love for us readily lights our life path.

But how can we be assured that the Lord truly loves us without knowing who God is? We can’t! “There’s a difference between knowing God and knowing about God,” wrote J.I. Packer in his Christian classic *Knowing God*. “When you truly know God, you have energy to serve Him, boldness to share Him, and contentment in Him.” Moreover, “Knowing God is a relationship calculated to thrill a man’s heart.” In other words, there is an evident intimacy in knowing God; and in knowing God, our heart receives His deep love for us. Whatever He asks of us is for our own spiritual welfare. Therefore, in times of distress and anxiety, His commands comfort us with His assurance of His love for us; then we can rejoice, confident that we are securely in the Lord’s hands.

Another element in knowing God is fearing God. It is not the fear of a mad tyrant, but, like the psalmist, knowing that there are consequences to breaking or ignoring His commands. Nothing good comes from such behavior or attitude. Again, His commands are for our own good, and violating them can only be bad for us. Therefore, “delight in the fear of the LORD” (Isa. 11:3).

Finally, let us always remember and rejoice that God’s “word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path” (Ps. 119:105).

13. *Why should you fear the Lord God?*

14. *How does God’s commands indicate to you that He loves you?*

15. *Why do you delight in the Lord’s commands?*

Rejoice!

In one section of Psalm 119, the psalmist relates the hardship he is enduring, particularly at the hands of his enemies. Nevertheless, the psalmist expresses his gratitude for God's command, which brings joy to his heart because it shows God's love and care for him. We can identify with his statements, for we know that what the Lord demands from us is truly what is best for us.

► *Select a command or teaching in the Bible that delights you, and write it here. Commit this command or teaching to memory. For each day of this coming week, recite it as part of your prayer, as well as relating to the Lord why this Scripture causes you to rejoice.*

KEY VERSE

Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding that I may learn thy commandments. —Psalm 119:73, KJV

Your hands made me and formed me; give me understanding to learn your commands. —Psalm 119:73, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of July 22 through July 28

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

Mon. 2 Peter 1:16-21—Await the Dawning Day.

Tues. 2 Peter 3:1-15a—Hasten God's New Creation.

Wed. Psalm 59:1-9, 17—God Is My Fortress.

Thurs. Matthew 25:1-13—Watch and Be Ready.

Fri. Matthew 25:14-21, 24-30—Watch and Work Faithfully.

Sat. Lamentations 3:25-36—Wait for God's Salvation.

Sun. Psalm 130—Wait and Hope in the Lord.