

Wisdom Incarnate

Psalm 119-97-104

- ⁹⁷ Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.
⁹⁸ You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; For they are ever with me.
⁹⁹ I have more understanding than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation.
¹⁰⁰ I understand more than the ancients, Because I keep Your precepts.
¹⁰¹ I have restrained my feet from every evil way, That I may keep Your word.
¹⁰² I have not departed from Your judgments, For You Yourself have taught me.
¹⁰³ How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth!
¹⁰⁴ Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.

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There is a form of Hebrew poetry called parallelism. We find it throughout the psalms and book of proverbs. In Hebrew parallelism, the writer will place two or more related thoughts in sequence – that is, parallel to one another. This was a useful structure for worship settings where the people of Israel would sing these parallel thoughts responsively, even as we still make use of the psalms in worship today. So we take note of this in our text.

97 Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.

Notice the parallelism in these two thoughts. The second is further explaining the first. The psalmist loves the Lord's instruction. How? It is his meditation throughout the whole day. That is, he loves God's Word so much that he gives it constant consideration all day long. Quite a statement!

So as you note the parallelism throughout the verses, you see how broad the psalmist is thinking. He loves the Lord's law, His commandments, His testimonies, His precepts, His Word. Basically, anything that comes from the LORD's mouth is sweet to his taste; sweeter than honey to his mouth. There is basically one idea: the psalmist loves the Lord's instruction, and it is developed in several parallel expressions. The various expressions build off of each other, presenting a much richer meaning for us to consider.

I'd like you to think about another kind of parallelism that is going on. There is more to this psalm than literary devices. There is a parallelism that is going on within the psalmist himself – a living parallelism where the psalmist himself is aligned with everything that the Lord desires. There is this deeper parallelism for us to consider. It happens when our thoughts and actions find themselves in perfect sequence with God's instruction. And when this happens, then true wisdom is discovered. True wisdom aligns itself in perfect appreciation for God's Word.

103 How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Of course, who among us can say such things? On a day to day basis, just how sweet do those words taste? They should be so sweet; so delightful; that they consume our thoughts all day long – when we wake up; when we get the coffee ready; on our way to work; as we sit at our desk; when we work at home; when we are on lunch break; when we return home; when we greet our spouse; when we deal with our children; when we speak to our parents; when we lie down at night; when we go to church; when we don't go to church. God's word should be so sweet to us that we long for another taste – like a child who wants to lick the spoon.

Jose' was a child who longed for the word of God; but today was a busy day. The family had taken the time out of their busy Sunday to come to worship; but as soon as that was over, they had to get going. They were supposed to meet up with some relatives for lunch. But Jose wanted to stay for Sunday School.

"Sorry, Jose." Dad said quietly. "If we don't leave now, we'll be late for lunch." Dad was a little embarrassed when he saw others adults were making their way to Bible Class.

Jose responded, "But dad, I want to stay and learn more about God."

"No can do, pal. We need to get going to meet your aunt and uncle and then we have to get home. Your mom and I have a lot of stuff to do. Come on."

"But dad, what could be more important than the Bible? Don't you want to stay at church as long as you can?"

"We'll talk in the car." And dad walked out the door. Respectfully, the boy followed.

You see, Jose was a child who longed to taste that sweet Word. Just one more taste. Dad was ready to move on with his day and week, but not Jose. Jose longed to hear a little more, to learn just one more Bible passage, just one more song about Jesus. Wisdom was not found in the grown up, but in a child. We might call it: wisdom incarnate – wisdom “in the flesh.” That is, in that little boy, we find a wisdom of faith; there in Jose’s words and attitude is wisdom incarnate.

But of course how often is this our experience? Children typically don’t long for the word any more than adults. How often do we want sit and hear the Word of God? For how long can we sit for a home devotion, for a Bible Story, for a sermon? It is hard to sit there, in that wooden pew, to quietly pay attention – it is hard when all the rest of our week is filled with running to and fro, appointments, sports, shopping, etc. More often we are thinking like dad was – when will this be over? what’s next? There is always something that tastes sweeter to our sinful flesh. If we were to give a child the choice between church and staying home and playing, what would they decide? Would we do the same if it were school?

The tough fact is – we don’t usually think like the psalm is thinking. There is little, if any, parallelism between my thoughts and the words of the text. And that is because, by nature, my thinking is crooked. It just does not align with the pure heart and unending devotion that God deserves. There is always somewhere else; something else; someone else – there is always something that appears a little tastier.

It is more than we can expect out of Jose or any of us. Because true wisdom never ceases to appreciate hearing the Lord’s commands. Such wisdom not only wants to stay for Sunday School; He wants to stay forever. Forever in the house of the Lord; forever about His Father’s business. This wisdom appears in the words and actions of Jesus – incarnate, that is, “in flesh.”

It was his family who left in a hurry. His father and mother rushed off to catch up with relatives. They left assuming he was with them the cousins. And when they later discovered he was gone, they were distraught. They searched and searched and could not find him. Where was He?

No one was really thinking the way Jesus was thinking. Not any one of us have had such a mind: a mind committed to the Father’s ways; committed to the Father’s business. Jesus’ mind that was focused on one place and one thing:

101 I have restrained my feet from every evil way, That I may keep Your word.

Such wisdom can be found only in the Father's house and only in the person of Christ. Who else can express such perfect parallelism with God's Word? And just 12 year old! Just on the verge of becoming a teenager; He was a teenager who longed for that word all the day. A teenager who possessed the sort of attitude that hated every false way. A teenager who wanted nothing else than to taste of that sweet word. And not by constraint. Jesus was never dragged out of bed to go to church. He did not need to be bribed to sit still. He did not need to be told to go to Sunday School or stay for Bible Class. He did not do so because He felt guilty or to impress others. He simply loved His Father's words. So there He was, in the Temple, asking questions, proving a wisdom which was wiser than even the most learned scribes of the Temple.

99 I have more understanding than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation.

Jesus is wisdom incarnate. When he speaks, wisdom speaks. When He acts, wisdom acts.

As is expressed in Proverbs 8,

Listen, for I will speak of excellent things, And from the opening of my lips will come right things; For my mouth will speak truth; Wickedness is an abomination to my lips. All the words of my mouth are with righteousness; Nothing crooked or perverse is in them. They are all plain to him who understands, And right to those who find knowledge. Receive my instruction, and not silver, And knowledge rather than choice gold; For wisdom is better than rubies, And all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her. "I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, And find out knowledge and discretion. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate. (Proverbs 8:6-13)

"The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His way, Before His works of old. I have been established from everlasting, From the beginning, before there was ever an earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, When there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, Before the hills, I was brought forth; While as yet He had not made the earth or the fields, Or the primal dust of the world. When He prepared the heavens, I was there, When He drew a circle on the face of the deep, When He established the clouds above, When He strengthened the fountains of the deep. (Proverbs 8:22-28)

He was there from the beginning. But if He possessed all this from eternity, if He is wisdom itself by nature; why should He become a child, why should he go to church, why should Jesus learn at the feet of scribes and be subject to his parents when they tell him it is time to go. It is because His way of wisdom, had to be earned. It was done this way for you. Jesus is wisdom in the flesh for you. His grew in wisdom and in the fear

of the Lord just like a human boy. He did this for you. To fulfill what is lacking in all of us. That He might give it all to you. His wisdom is your wisdom. His love for God's instruction is your love for God's instruction.

And yet in the midst of our busyness; in the midst of our inattentiveness; in the midst of our disinterest; in the midst of our sins; wisdom speaks up. Wisdom speaks for us; He speaks, thinks, and acts in perfect parallelism to the Word of God. It is the wisdom of a child; of a boy; of a student who is so wise, he has surpassed all his teachers. It is wisdom incarnate.

His parallelism has made your crooked ways straight; so that in God's eyes, you are in perfect sync with His ways and His thoughts. The psalm is not so far off; not so unattainable. It is yours.

But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:30-31).

And now we join Jose to stay just a bit longer. Now we see that God's words are as sweet as honey. No longer do these words express some sort of demand; that you have to be in church, or you have to go to Sunday School; or you must stay for Bible Class; or you better start doing home devotions – Because of Christ, this is who we are. We are perfect and wise and faithful and righteous; these are all credited to us on Jesus' behalf. Now we taste and see that the Lord is good. And we come, we gather, we pray for just another taste. And we open our hearts as God's word drips with the sweetness of the gospel – words of forgiveness for our inattentiveness; words of grace for our many distracted moments; words of encouragement for the devotional life we want to have. Words which fill us and set our feet on the paths of Christ.

104 Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.

Yes, there is a wisdom that exists among us in the flesh, incarnate; a parallelism with the thoughts of God expressed in human form. It is the wisdom of Christ in us. In addition to the wisdom of Christ for us; and there is also a wisdom of Christ in us. It is expressed in our own life; in the passages we memorize, in the teachings we learn, in the promise we store away within our hearts – wisdom incarnate. It is God's wisdom dwelling in us, in our bodies, in our minds – and ultimately, it is nothing more than the mind of Jesus.

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.
(Colossinas 3:16)*

For only with the word of Christ dwelling among us can we now say:

101 I have restrained my feet from every evil way, That I may keep Your word.

For in Jesus, you have restrained your feet from every evil way. God has forgiven you by His death and resurrection. In Jesus, you are forgiven and set free from any constraints or expectations of the Law. It is a new mindset. It is a new mind. For the mind of Christ remains our wisdom, our righteousness; God accepts our worship not because we think like Jesus; but because we think of Jesus.

It is a sort of poetry, isn't it? a sort of parallelism that exists when we believe in Jesus and God gives us every perfect thought and attitude that the child Jesus ever thought, felt, or did. Jesus is wisdom incarnate, and by faith in Him, you are too. Amen.