

“Save Me, That I May Observe Your Testimonies”

Sometimes you just need to talk about Scripture with other people. This past week, I was involved in a Bible study with several men in the area discussing **Psalm 119:145-149**. I was absolutely stunned by what I learned.

The psalmist wanted to do right. According to **vss. 145-146**, this psalmist wanted to obey God. This psalmist wanted to keep God’s statutes and observe His testimonies. The psalmist was not trying to figure out how many of the statutes he had to keep to go to heaven or how many of the testimonies he had to observe to stay out of hell. The psalmist was not trying to barter with God about how much he actually had to give up and how far he was allowed to go but still get to heaven. He wanted to be like God. Too many times I’ve wondered, “If I’m saved by grace, why do I have to do anything?” When I ask that, I’ve got a problem. I’m admitting I don’t want to serve God; I don’t want to be like God. I just want something from God and I’m trying to barter my way to get it. That is not this psalmist. He wanted to do right.

The psalmist knew he would fail at doing right. “I call to you; save me, that I may observe your testimonies” (**vs. 146**). He didn’t call to God, “Save me because I have kept your testimonies.” Rather, it was save me so I can keep your testimonies. The man knew he would fail. He knew he wouldn’t observe the testimonies like he wanted. Doesn’t this sound like Paul in **Romans 7:15**?

The psalmist knew God could and would save Him. For the psalmist, salvation was not something he would get if he observed enough of God’s statutes. Salvation was something he needed in order to keep the statutes of God like he wanted to do. Too often, for me salvation has equaled receiving forgiveness. Not so. Salvation is complete wholeness and healing. Salvation is being fixed. I have chosen to sin so much that I have broken myself, if you will. Sin now has control. Salvation is fixing me so that God has control instead of sin. Again, read **Romans 7:14-25**. Salvation is not simply the forgiveness that sets me free from my past sins, it is God’s work in my life to overcome the potential future sins. Isn’t that what I want? Don’t I want to do right? Salvation is God’s mean of strengthening me to do right like I wanted.

Thus I learn a problem. If I don’t want to do right, I won’t be saved. God won’t save me against my will. If I’m trying to barter my way with God to allow me to do wrong, I can’t be saved because that is the exact opposite of salvation. If Christianity is a hindrance to what I want to do and I’m trying to negotiate with God to figure out how much of what I want to do I can get away with and yet still go to heaven, I’m sunk.

The psalmist knew he had to connect daily with God. If the issue is that I want to do right, but won’t, and I only will by the salvation and power of God, then today and every day my number one goal is not to simply try harder at observing God’s statutes. I’ve already learned I will fail at that approach. My number one goal is to have conscious contact with God, connecting to Him so that His grace and strength will accomplish far more abundantly than all I can ask or think by His power working in me (**Ephesians 3:20**). Therefore, the psalmist said, “I rise before dawn and cry for help; I hope in you words. My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promise” (**vs. 147-148**). I have spent too much time wondering how much prayer and Bible study I have to do to be good enough to go to heaven. It doesn’t work like that. The psalmist prayed and studied God’s word because he knew he needed God. He made conscious contact with and connected to God by calling out to Him in prayer and listening to Him through His word.

When I want to do right, when I want to overcome sin, when I want to be holy, I have to connect with God. I don’t earn anything or prove anything about myself by spending a certain number of minutes in prayer or Bible study. Rather, I’m given a gift through those things. I’m connecting with God and imbibing His power in order to observe His statutes.

The psalmist had confidence in God’s love to give him life. Far too often we don’t live confidently in Christ because we are basing our confidence on us. We think our confidence and assurance will come by trying harder and doing better and when we’ve reached a certain level we can be confident that we are good enough. That won’t work. That will only lead to the despairing cry, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (**Romans 7:24**). But this psalmist did not put his confidence in his own ability. He put his confidence in God’s love. He was confident that if he

relied on himself, he would fail. But if he relied on God, crying out to Him, listening to Him, God would save him so he would keep the statutes. God would make a judgment and that judgment would be life.

What is really amazing about this is what life is in this context. I too often have thought if I try really hard and do enough of God's good things then God will give me life. Not so in this context. In these verses, life is equated with the ability to do God's will. Life is doing God's will. Jesus came to give us life and to give it to us abundantly (**John 10:10**). Again, if I am trying to figure out how much of my own will I can keep doing and still get life, I won't have life. That is actually the exact opposite of life. My way ends in death (**Proverbs 14:12; 16:25**); God's way is life.

Therefore, the take away for me today is what am I doing today to have that conscious contact with God? What am I doing to connect with God today? What about you?