

Introduction:

What should I pray for? Have you ever asked that question? We all know we should pray, but once we've covered our health and asking God to bless as many people as we can think of, where do we need to turn in prayer? **Psalm 119** is a massive look at the Word of God, but from the standpoint of a suffering saint. It is actually a long lament. This psalmist has delighted in and listened to God's Word and is wondering why God has not yet delivered him from his present struggle. He is looking for victory. He is looking for it through God and His covenant Word. The whole psalm is a prayer, but there is one section that really highlights a prayer for victory. Read **Psalm 119:33-40**. If you are wondering where to take your praying as you long for the victory in this life's struggle, check out this passage.

Discussion:

I. Teach me your statutes

- A. The foundation of his prayer was the statutes of the Lord. He wanted to know them and he prayed that the Lord would teach him. As we know, a disciple learns from God. A victorious disciple prays for more learning. In **vs. 25**, we see the struggle the psalmist is in. His soul clings to the dust. In **vs. 61**, the cords of the wicked ensnare him. The insolent are smearing him with lies according to **vs. 69**. Yet despite the struggle he is in, his first concern is knowing God's will. Though he doesn't know how it is going to end, he claims he wants to know the Lord's statutes so he can keep them until the end.
- B. We need to start there. "Teach me Your statutes." Let me know your will. I want to obey. I want to serve. I want to surrender to your will no matter what. No matter what is going on in my life, whether good days or bad, I want to learn your will.

II. Give me understanding

- A. This is the same request Solomon makes in **I Kings 3:9, 11**. He longed for understanding and discernment so he could tell the difference between good and evil. He knew he would be in difficult situations governing a people that were too numerous for him. If he would do well, he needed understanding.
- B. If we want victory, we need to pray for understanding. Consider what **Romans 8:5-8** and **I Corinthians 2:12-14** say. If we are not careful, we will make one of two mistakes of extremism. We will either 1) act like these passages mean the Bible is mysterious, not meaning what it looks like it means, and only through some spiritual mystery can we get the real hidden meaning or 2) we run to the other extreme that says a person doesn't need any help understanding God's Word. Both miss the point of these passages. We can read and understand, but we must focus on the things of the Spirit. We need to pray for understanding. We need the understanding God gives as we focus on His Spirit.

III. Lead me in your path

- A. In **Psalm 23:3**, David explains God leads His sheep in paths of righteousness. The psalmist of **Psalm 119**, wants to be led in God's path because he also knows it is a path of righteousness. He delights in the path of God. We especially love these paths because as **Psalm 23:2** says this path of righteousness leads to green pastures and beside quiet waters.
- B. But the Psalmist recognizes it is a path of commandments. Many want the green pastures and the quiet waters, but shy away from commands. Commands seem so limiting, so structured, so controlling. Not the disciple who longs for victory. The Disciple longing for victory seeks the path of the commands of the Lord because he/she knows where that path leads—life (cf. **John 12:50**).

IV. Incline my heart

- A. According to **Jeremiah 17:9**, the heart is deceitful and sick. If we are not careful, our heart will deceive us. As **Proverbs 14:12; 16:25** say, the way that seems right to a man will end in death. In **Psalm 141:4**, David asks God not to allow his heart to be inclined to evil.
- B. We know we must guard the heart because from it flows the springs of life (**Proverbs 4:23**). The victorious saint understands that the fight for his/her heart cannot be conducted alone. We must call on God to work in and through our hearts.

V. Turn my eyes from worthless things

- A. Job made a covenant with his eyes (**Job 31:1**). The psalmist seeks God's help in setting a guard over his eyes. It is interesting that this should follow the request about the heart. As the eye roams, so roams the heart. As **Matthew 6:22-23** explains the eye is the lamp of the body. If the eye is filled with light, the body will be. If the eye is filled with darkness so will the body.
- B. What do you look at? What do you read? What do you watch? I know this is a struggle for me. It is too easy to get caught up in the entertaining story and then realize I've been watching sin and justifying it. But, oh, I want to learn what happens next in the story. Even if it isn't about some sin, sometimes it is just about time. We all need time for recreation, but if we aren't careful, our eyes are focused on what is worthless for hours and hours and hours per day, scrolling through Facebook posts, watching television and movies, playing video games wasting time that could be spent in the Word, with the brethren, serving others.

VI. Confirm your promises

- A. This request cuts to the heart of the psalm. The psalmist, as we recognized earlier, is going through difficulties. He has enemies and struggles. He is wondering why God is letting it happen and go on so long. He knows there are covenant promises of protection and safety. So he asks God to confirm His promises.
- B. If you are like me, this is one of the shocking aspects of prayer in the psalms. These psalmists believe they are allowed to ask God to keep up His end of the deal. I know I rarely feel this because I know how poorly I've kept up my end. However, I'm sure they all recognized their own shortcomings and sins as well. May I remind you of God's promises to us? In **Romans 8:28**, the promise is that all things will work together for good for those that love God. Further, in **I Peter 5:10**, the promise is that the God of all grace will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish us. Of course, to see the confirmation of this, we have to open our eyes. We have to count our blessings. We have to look back over the long haul of life. But the saint who longs for victory remembers the promises of the Lord and asks for the confirmation.

VII. Turn away my reproach

- A. As was often the case among saints, this psalmist was being reproached. Because of the suffering he was going through, he would be laughed at and mocked by those who wouldn't pursue the same course of faithfulness. Similarly to the mockers of **II Peter 3:3-4**, they mock and belittle those who wait on the Lord, questioning His coming and faithfulness. The psalmist asks God to turn away that reproach. This is a request for judgment on those who will not repent of their oppression and persecution.
- B. In **II Thessalonians 1:5-12**, Paul describes the judgment that is to come. Yes, we may go through affliction and suffering. We may, like the martyrs of **Revelation 6:10**, question God about the length of time He will let that go on. However, the reproach that is brought on us because we stand true with Christ will be taken away. God will bring judgment on those who persecute and oppress. Yes, we long for them to repent, be forgiven, walk in God's grace as we have learned to do. But for those who refuse, the victorious saint requests his/her reproach be taken away. Because, of course, reproach brought upon God's people goes back to God. His name needs to be glorified in us.

VIII. Give me life

- A. Isn't that the ultimate victory? Life? And that is the culmination of this prayer. Every other aspect of this prayer was leading to this. Life!
- B. We were enshrouded in death for so long. We need life. And it only comes through Jesus Christ (cf. **Romans 7:24-25**). According to **John 10:10**, Jesus came that we may have life and have it abundantly. Recognize that life comes from God's righteousness. Because of God's righteous commitment to His covenant and promise, to do what He has committed Himself to, to be what He is by nature. That is where life comes from. Therefore, we need to seek for the life from His righteousness, not try to barter our righteousness for life. That won't work. Through His love, mercy, grace, and righteousness, He will give life. We must seek it from Him.

Conclusion:

The psalmists know how to pray. They know how to pray for victory. When you wonder what to pray for next, turn to **Psalm 119:33-40** and pray for the victory. God will lead you to life, and that is the victory.