

*That I May Learn Thy Commandments*  
*Psalms 119:73*

In **Psalm 119:73** the psalmist prayed unto the Lord, saying, “Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.” Indeed, just a little earlier in the psalm, the psalmist had proclaimed in **Psalm 119:71**, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.” Finally, near the beginning of the psalm in **Psalm 119:7**, the psalmist had pronounced his commitment unto the Lord, saying, “I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.” In all three of these verses the psalmist spoke concerning the matter of learning God’s truth from God’s Holy Word. Now, many times throughout the psalm, the psalmist, this young man of God, asked the Lord to teach him the truth and wisdom of God’s Word. However, in these three verses the psalmist spoke specifically concerning the process of learning itself. Even so, there are three truths that we might learn from these three verses concerning the process of learning the truth and wisdom of God’s Word.

I. The Motive for Learning God’s Truth

In **Psalm 119:7** the psalmist revealed the motive for learning the truth and wisdom of God’s Word, saying, “I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.” Herein the result of learning also serves as the motive for learning. So then, what is this result of and motive for learning the truth and wisdom of God’s Word? It is that we might develop “uprightness of heart.” It is that we might develop uprightness and godliness in the character of our inner man. There may indeed be other motives for learning the truths of God’s Word. However, this is the right motive for maintaining the desire and the discipline to learn the truth and wisdom of God’s Holy Word – that we might cleanse our way unto the paths of righteousness (see **Psalm 119:9**) and that we might avoid the paths of sin against our Lord (see **Psalm 119:11**). According to **Romans 12:2**, we need to be spiritually transformed in our character by the renewing of our minds. So then, what tool has the Lord our God provided by which our minds may be renewed and our character may be transformed? **Psalm 19:7** reveals the answer, saying, “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul [that is – spiritually renewing the mind and transforming the character]: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.” Indeed, **2 Timothy 3:16-17** declares, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: [Why?] that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” This is our righteous motive for learning the truth and wisdom of God’s Word – that we may be perfected unto righteousness and uprightness in character and that we may be thoroughly equipped to fulfill the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of the Lord our God in our lives. This is our righteous motive for maintaining the desire and the discipline to learn the truth and wisdom of God’s Word – that we may grow in spiritual maturity thereby. (See **1 Peter 2:2**)

II. The Means for Learning God’s Truth

In **Psalm 119:71** the psalmist revealed the means by which he was moved to learn the truth and wisdom of God’s Word, saying, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I

might learn thy statutes.” Now, herein the psalmist was not speaking about the general affliction of living in this world. Rather, the psalmist was speaking about the specific affliction of discipline from the Lord. Yea, in **verse 67** the psalmist gave the report, “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.” Furthermore, in **verse 75** the psalmist expressed the truth, “I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.” So then, we may understand that the affliction which the psalmist had experienced was that which the Lord God had brought upon him specifically as discipline because he had gone astray into sin. The affliction that he experienced came directly from the chastening hand of the Lord. In addition, from these three verses we may understand the process by which the psalmist was moved to pursue learning and living the truth and wisdom of God’s Word. First, he went astray into the paths of unrighteousness; for he gave the report, “Before I was afflicted, I went astray.” Second, he was afflicted by the chastening hand of the Lord; for he expressed the truth, “I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.” Third, he was moved to repentance of sin and to pursue learning and living the truth of God’s Word; for he gave the report, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes;” and the report, “But now have I kept thy word.”

Brethren, the affliction of our Lord’s discipline and chastening is specifically intended as a means to move us unto repentance and unto a pursuit after learning and living the truth and wisdom of God’s Word. Yet it is possible for us to harden ourselves against that discipline and that purpose. Even so, in **Proverbs 3:11-12** the warning is given, “My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: for whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.” Furthermore, in **Proverbs 28:13-14** the warning is given, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.” Finally, in **Proverbs 29:1** the warning is given, “He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.” On the other hand, it is far better if we submit ourselves to be exercised by our Lord’s discipline and chastening. Even so, **Hebrews 12:11** declares, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” So then, how do we submit ourselves to be exercised by our Lord’s discipline and chastening? We do so by allowing it to move us unto broken-hearted repentance of sin and to move us unto a diligent pursuit after learning and living the truth of God’s Word. Indeed, if we do not allow the affliction of our Lord’s discipline to move us in this way, but harden ourselves against it, then we shall come to spiritual destruction. Yet if we do submit ourselves to be exercised by the affliction of our Lord’s discipline and to be moved in this way, then we shall come to “the peaceable fruit of righteousness” in our lives. Even so, **Proverbs 5:23** declares, “For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:” Even so also, in **Proverbs 1:23** the personified wisdom of God’s Word cries forth the instruction and the promise unto us, saying, “Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.” First, there is the affliction of the Lord’s reproof. Then there is the turning of a repentant heart. Finally, there is the learning of the truth (words) and wisdom (spirit) of God’s Word.

### III. The Method for Learning God's Truth

In **Psalm 119:73** the psalmist revealed the method for learning the truth and wisdom of God's Word, saying, "Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments." Herein the psalmist, this young man of God, prayed unto the Lord that the Lord might give him the spiritual understanding to learn the truth and wisdom of God's Holy Word. Indeed, in **verse 18** the psalmist had prayed unto the Lord, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law [that is – the wondrous truths and wisdom of God's Holy Word]." Brethren, we are not naturally able to understand and learn the wondrous truths and wisdom of God's Word; for such requires spiritual discernment. Yet the Lord our God who created us, who made us and fashioned us, is more than able to grant us the gift of spiritual discernment, to grant us an understanding mind that we might learn the wondrous truths of His Word and to grant us an understanding heart that we might learn the wondrous wisdom of His Word.

Yea, for us New Testament believers, the Lord our God has even given us more; for He has given unto us His own Holy Spirit to dwell within us and to guide us into His truth and wisdom. Even so, in **John 16:13** our Lord Jesus Christ declared, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." Furthermore, in **1 Corinthians 2:9-13** God's Word declares, "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him [that is – the wondrous truths and wisdom of His Word]. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; [Why?] that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth [that is – the wondrous truths and wisdom of God's Word]; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." So then, the method for learning the truth and wisdom of God's Word is complete dependence upon the Lord our God to grant us spiritual understanding through the guidance of His indwelling Holy Spirit.