

LENT DEVOTIONAL MARCH 6, 2017

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SCRIPTURE

PSALM 119:73-80

- 73 Your hands have made and fashioned me;
give me understanding that I may learn your commandments.
- 74 Those who fear you shall see me and rejoice,
because I have hoped in your word.
- 75 I know, O LORD, that your judgments are right,
and that in faithfulness you have humbled me.
- 76 Let your steadfast love become my comfort
according to your promise to your servant.
- 77 Let your mercy come to me, that I may live;
for your law is my delight.
- 78 Let the arrogant be put to shame,
because they have subverted me with guile;
as for me, I will meditate on your precepts.
- 79 Let those who fear you turn to me,
so that they may know your decrees.
- 80 May my heart be blameless in your statutes,
so that I may not be put to shame.

DEVOTIONAL

I suspect few modern Christians have ever read Psalm 119 closely. One reason for that is it is simply so long and so repetitive. It has 176 verses that seem to go over the same ground again and again. But more off-putting than that is the subject: the Law and its benefits. Many readers will undoubtedly say, “But I thought we were freed from the Law” (Gal 3:23-29). A close reading of this psalm reveals, however, that it is neither pedantically repetitive nor naively touting legalism. The “law” the psalm speaks of is simply God’s instructions in their many forms. The story of salvation is part of that instruction. So in today’s reading the psalmist first confesses that God is the only source of goodness and life: “Your hands have made and fashioned me” (v. 73a). The commandments come into play as the psalmist asks for greater understanding of how to respond to God’s goodness (v. 73b); therefore, it is possible for us to say, with the psalmist, “your law is my delight” (v. 77b).

PRAYER

How delightful it is, O God, to be obedient to you. In our better moments we recognize that serving you is not binding or restrictive. Your people Israel learned long ago that they had a choice: serving Pharaoh or serving you. Help us to choose you, the one who supplies all our needs. Truly in your care alone we are able to say, “I shall not want” (Ps 23:1b). Amen.

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