**Take Time to be Holy**

***Psalm 119:9-16***

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Introduction: Consider the story behind the hymn, “Take Time to be Holy.” The words were written, not by a pastor or poet or musician, but by a wealthy philanthropist in England, William Dunn Longstaff. Sometime after the words were written, they came into the hands of Ira Sankey & were later recorded in some religious journals. The words were clipped from a journal & given to George Stebbins who went on to write the tune to which it is sung today. We come tonight to the second “stanza” of Psalm 119. A sug-gested theme for this psalm is “The practical use of the Word of God in the life of the believer” (Wiersbe). While not conclusively identifying the author, Wiersbe says of him, “His love for the Word of God puts today’s believers to shame. If the psalmist with his limited knowledge & resources could live a godly & victorious life feeding on the O.T., how much more ought Christians today live for the Lord. After all, we have the entire Bible before us & two millennia of church history behind us!”

An appropriate theme for our verses tonight could be: “Take time to be holy.” Note with me here: the protection by the Word; the proclamation of the Word; & the profit from the Word.

I. The **protection** by the Word (:9-11)

[There is an opening question which could be worded: “How shall one become holy & remain

practically holy?” This is the only stanza that opens with a question.]

A. The Word deserves our attention because of its **cleansing** effect (:9) >

1. The first step (implied) is one’s cleansing from sin’s penalty – Isaiah 1:18 & cf. Revelation 1:5

2. The second step is daily cleansing from sin’s defilement – I John 1:7-10.

Illustrate: John 13:10 (Christ washing His disciples’ feet).

B. The Word desires our devotion because of its **controlling** effect (:10) >

1. The psalmist seeks God Himself, not just His commands.

2. The psalmist desires protection (& prevention) for wandering away from God’s law.

Summary: “It is pleasant to see how the writer’s heart turns distinctly & directly to God. He had

been considering an important truth in the preceding verse, but here he so powerfully feels the

presence of his God that he speaks to Him, & prays to Him as to One who is near. A true heart

cannot live long without fellowship with God” (Spurgeon).

C. The Word demands our memorization because of its **correcting** effect (:11) >

1. The “best thing” – *“Thy Word”*; the “best place” – *“in my heart”*; the “best purpose” – *“that I*

*might not sin against Thee.”*

2.. “This Book will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from this Book.”

Application: “His heart would be kept by the Word because he kept the Word in his heart”

(Spurgeon).

II. The **proclamation** of the Word (:12-13)

A. The psalmist’s request to be taught (:12) >

1. He begins with praise of who God is, blessing God for what he is doing.

2. He asks for the Word in his heart to be revealed for his learning.

B. The psalmist’s response when taught (:13) >

1. The one taught now becomes a teacher – see II Timothy 2:1-2.

2. The one taught needs to heed the warning illustrated by the Dead Sea – continually taking in

but not giving out.

Summary: It is only by being taught that we learn & before we can proclaim the Word to others.

III. The **profit** from the Word (:14-16)

A. There is rejoicing in the Word (*“testimonies”*) (:14) >

1. *“Testimonies”* – everything to which God bears witness (His Person, principles, & purposes).

2. *“As much as in all riches”* – compare Proverbs 2:1-7 (seeking wisdom) & Psalm 19:10.

Summary: “Delight in the Word of God is a sure proof that it has taken effect upon the heart, &

that it is cleansing the life’ (Spurgeon).

B. There is reflecting on the Word (*“precepts, ways”*) (:15) >

1. *“Precepts”* – detailed practical instructions.

2. *“Meditate”* – it comes from the Hebrew word “to mutter”; it suggests reading aloud & talking

to oneself about it; it is examining from every angle (cf. “worry”); it is likened to a cow

chewing its cud.

Summary: “Meditation upon the Word of God is one of the most important of all the means of

grace & growth in spirituality, yea, there can be no true progress in vital & practical godliness

without it” (Pink). See Joshua 1:8 & Psalm 1:2.

C. There is remembering of the Word (*“statutes, word”*) (:16) >

1. *“Statutes”* – things that are written down; standing orders; permanent constitution.

2. *“Delight”* – that in which we delight has captured our attention & that we will think about &

meditate on.

Summary: “Men do not readily forget that which they have treasured up (:14), that which they have

meditated on (:15), & that which they have spoken of (:13). Yet since we have treacherous memories

it is well to bind them well with the knotted cord of *‘I will not forget’* “ (Spurgeon).

Conclusion: We see throughout Psalm 119 the combination of delighting in the Word, loving of the Word, & meditating upon the Word. For example, note verses 15-16; 23-24; 47-48; 77-78; 97-99. Con-sider again the story behind “Take Time to be Holy.” The writer of the words, William Longstaff, came from a Methodist background. There was the desire in the Church at that time to make holiness the normal result of Christian growth. But Longstaff took exception to the emotional excesses which some sects were displaying in regard to a false conception of holiness. He was recorded as saying, “Since holiness is the life of God in the life of man, surely we need not scream & shout as if God were deaf, nor make fools of ourselves in our services of public worship as if God Himself were a fool. We are not to be holy as idiots are holy, or as drunkards & fools are holy, but we are to be holy as God Himself is holy.” He sought by his living & in his speaking to be an example of the truth he wrote about it this song.

Follow along again as I read Psalm 119:9-16 & consider our need to take time to be holy!