

Your hands have made me and fashioned me; Give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments. Those who fear You will be glad when they see me, Because I have hoped in Your word” (Psalm 119:73-74)

In this the tenth octave of the 119th Psalm, the poet is focused on himself. There are no less than seventeen references to the first person in these eight verses.

This may seem very self-centered, but it is far from being unspiritual. Indeed the first and foremost concern of every serious minded person should be for himself. The carnal minded person is the one whose problems are always those which have to do with other people, their evil doings and their provocations. The sensitive spiritual soul, however, is ever alarmed and concerned about his own sins, shortcomings and offences to others.

The prayer, then, is that God will finish and perfect His work in me. The plea before the Throne is a powerful one. “Lord I am Your project. You are the cause and means of my existence. I did not create myself; I am not the product of society’s engineering or of blind chance. I came directly out of the Divine Mind. You have an eternal purpose in my being here. It is by Your Handiwork, the ordering of providence that shaped me and made me to be the particular person that I am. Please finish your work. Perfect me”.

The realization of this completion and perfection is to be achieved by endowment with *understanding* that I may be able to *learn* your commandments. “Give me a divine mind to go with this human body that there may indeed be a treasure in this earthen vessel.” There is something worse than being ignorant of the word of God; worse than having knowledge of it and yet ignoring its application in life. We can be cursed with that altogether common condition of knowing the form of the word, of even memorizing great portions of it, yet never *understanding* its substance. Those who are so afflicted often arrogate to themselves the office of teacher. They then open the Bible and destroy souls by perverting what it says.

The poet then acknowledges that God has been faithful to do the very thing he prays for. “*I know, O Lord that your judgments are right. And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.*” (vs. 75). This is a recounting of verse 71 in which it is remembered that affliction has been a means of learning God’s statutes. Understanding never comes apart from distressing afflictions. We have begun to learn when we stop wailing and whining over some reversal, realize that God has done something *good, not bad*, in all of this, and that we ought rather be praising Him and rejoicing in His blessings.

While this longing to be perfected, to gain understanding, to know the word of God is a marvelous personal blessing, it does not end there. In that blessedness the hearts of those who fear the Lord will be glad when their eyes fall upon one who knows the word of God and is able to impart it with understanding (vs.74). God’s people everywhere are seeking shepherds who will teach them. Too many are being dismayed by those who have no understanding, whose teachings do not have the ring of divine truth. If we gain

that priceless gift of the divine mind, then these will have someone to turn to and have their hungry souls fed (vs. 79). *C. M.*