

Summer Psalms
LONGING FOR AIR
Tuesday, July 15
Reading: Psalm 119:17-32

Psalm 119:20 *My soul is consumed with longing for Your laws at all times.*

There's an ancient story about a proud young man who came to Socrates asking for wisdom. He walked up to the philosopher and said, "O great Socrates, I come to you for wisdom." Socrates, recognizing a pompous fool when he saw one, led him down to the sea and took him chest deep into the water. Then he asked him, "What did you say you wanted?" "Wisdom, O great Socrates," said the young man.

Socrates put his strong hands on the man's shoulders and pushed him under. Thirty seconds later Socrates let him up. "What do you want?" he asked again. "Wisdom," the young man sputtered, "O great and wise Socrates." Socrates pushed him under again. Thirty seconds, thirty-five, forty – then Socrates let him up. The man was gasping. "What do you want, young man?" He wheezed, "Wisdom! O wise and wonderful..." Socrates jammed him under again – forty seconds passed then fifty – then he let him up. "What do you want?" "Air!" the young man yelled. "I need air!" "When you want wisdom as much as you have just wanted air, then you will begin to find wisdom."¹

The author of Psalm 119 desperately wants God's wisdom. Listen to how he describes his deep desire for God's Word.

1. "My soul is consumed with longing for Your laws" (119:20). This refers to an intense hunger for God's Word. It literally means to break with longing.
2. "I have chosen the way of faithfulness" (119:30). The idea in the Hebrew here is a careful conscious choice, not a whim or rash decision.
3. "I have set my heart on Your laws" (119:30). God's Word is sufficient and the psalmist has made it the focus of his life.
4. "I hold fast to Your statutes" (119:31). To hold fast in Hebrew means to stick to something. Today we might say that we will stick to the Bible like glue.
5. "I run in the path of Your commands" (119:32). In his desire to follow God's Word, he would not only walk (119:1, 35, 45), he would run in the path of God commands.

In these lines, we can feel the psalmist's heart. In the words of Socrates, he desired God's Word like air! It is only when I have this longing to know God through His Word that God can "open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in Your law" (119:18).

Do we view our daily Bible readings and devotions as a chore? Is it something we get through because we feel it is our duty to God? These attitudes are preventing us from having the intimate relationship God wants to have with us. It will take hard work and a lot of soul searching but developing a love and longing for God's Word will open wide our hearts to God's love and His life flowing through us (119:32).

¹ <https://camtaylor.net/2013/06/27/wisdom-air-to-a-drowning-man/>