

Psalms 119:34

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.

Analysis

Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law (הִבִּינֵנִי וְאֶצְרֶה תּוֹרָתְךָ)—Bin (to discern, understand) is penetrating insight that distinguishes truth from error. The Hiphil form (havineni) means 'cause me to understand'—understanding is God's gift, not human achievement. Torah (law, instruction) is kept only when understood, yet understanding itself must be granted. **Yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart** (וְאֶשְׁמְרָנָה בְּכָל־לֵב)—Shamar (to keep, observe, guard) with khol-lev (whole heart) promises undivided devotion. This echoes the Shema: "love the LORD your God with all your heart" (Deuteronomy 6:5).

The progression is revelatory: teaching (v.33) leads to understanding (v.34) which enables whole-hearted observance. This isn't legalistic externalism but Spirit-illuminated internalization. The psalmist recognizes that mere information doesn't transform—divine understanding must penetrate the heart. This is Ezekiel's promise: "A new heart also will I give you" (Ezekiel 36:26). Christ fulfills this as the incarnate Word who both reveals the Father and sends the illuminating Spirit.

Historical Context

Hebrew wisdom literature distinguishes between knowledge (facts) and understanding (discernment). The psalmist prays for binah, the ability to apply Torah to complex situations. In a pre-New Covenant context, this understanding was partial; post-Pentecost, the Spirit writes God's law on hearts, making whole-hearted observance possible through regeneration.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What's the difference between knowing God's law intellectually and having the understanding that enables heartfelt obedience?
2. How do you actively seek divine understanding of Scripture beyond reading—meditation, memorization, Spirit-dependent prayer?
3. Where are you trying to observe God's law through willpower instead of crying for the understanding that makes obedience flow from the heart?

Interlinear Text

הָ בִינִי	וְאֶצְרֶה	תּוֹכְתִי	וְאֶשְׁמְרָהּ	בְּכָל
Give me understanding	and I shall keep	thy law	yea I shall observe	H3605
H995	H5341	H8451	H8104	
לְבִי:				
it with my whole heart				
H3820				

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 7:24 (Parallel theme): Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

James 1:5 (Parallel theme): If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

Psalms 119:73 (Word): Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.

James 1:25 (Word): But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

Psalms 119:58 (Word): I intreated thy favour with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word.

Psalms 119:69 (Parallel theme): The proud have forged a lie against me: but I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart.

Psalms 119:10 (Word): With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.

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