
I hate the double-minded, but I love Your law. You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in Your word. Depart from me, you evildoers, for I will keep the commandments of my God! Uphold me according to your word, that I may live; and do not let me be ashamed of my hope. Hold me up, and I shall be safe, and I shall observe your statutes continually. You reject all those who stray from your statutes, for their deceit is falsehood. You put away all the wicked of the earth like dross; therefore I love your testimonies. My flesh trembles for fear of you, and I am afraid of your judgements.

(Psalm 119:113–120)

Introduction

One way to define spiritual maturity is “singlemindedness and stability.” When James wrote his epistle, he opened by writing about trials. He tells his readers to count it all joy when trials strike, because of what the trials produce (1:1–4), and urges them to seek wisdom from God in the midst of trials (1:5). However, those who ask for wisdom must do so “in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed about by the wind.” Such a person “must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways” (1:6–7).

Our goal as Christians must be singleminded devotion to Christ. We should strive to be calm and steady in the trials and vicissitudes of life. The story is told of Martyn Lloyd-Jones preaching a sermon during World War II as bombs were dropping around the city. It is said that he never missed a beat during his sermon, but continued expounding the word even as explosions rocked London. He was, we might say, single-mindedly devoted to the task at hand. That is the kind of singleminded focus we should strive for.

The Singleminded Are Affectionate

The singleminded are passionately and practically affectionate. The psalmist writes, “I hate the double-minded, but I love your law” (v. 113). The word “hate” means to view as a foe, to view something as odious. To “hate” something is to be against it, just as to “love” something is to be for it.

The psalmist seems to have individuals in mind. “The double-minded” are those who are sceptical of God’s truth, who are *not* singlemindedly devoted to his truth. They are without conviction, without confidence, and without belief in God’s word. By contrast, he appears to be saying that he loves not only God’s word, but also those who love God’s word. He loves those who are singlemindedly and passionately devoted to the Lord.

We need this kind of passion if we will mature: passion for God and for his word. We need to be singlemindedly devoted. We need to have affection for and delight in God and his word. There are plenty of people who have no affection for God and do not obey his law, but we need to be those who, like the psalmist, delight in God’s truth.

Christians should love the Lord, and part of what it means to love the Lord is to hate evil (Psalm 97:10). But it is a sad thing when Christians are only known for what they are *against* with no hint of passion for what they are *for*. Yes, we must be against some things, but the world must see what we love as much as it sees what we hate. And if we do love the Lord and his word, it will enable us to be winsome even when we stand against something. It is possible to be against something and to be winsome at the same time!

The Singleminded Are Secure

As we are singleminded in our devotion to the Lord, we will experience security. “You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in your word” (v. 114). Security comes to those who are singlemindedly devoted to the Lord.

The psalmist seems to understand that singleminded devotion to the Lord would make him vulnerable. Australian churches that are opposing the recent efforts to normalise same sex marriage are undergoing intense opposition. I saw one protestor bearing a sign that read, “Don’t burn gay marriage; burn churches.” Those who are devoted to the Lord will experience such opposition, but they will trust that they have a “hiding place” and a “shield” in the Lord and in his word. As we learn to live life within the fences of God’s law, we find safety.

The Singleminded Are Courageous

The singleminded also experience great courage: “Depart from me, you evildoers, that I may keep the commandments of my God” (v. 115). Because the psalmist was singlemindedly devoted to God, he could speak with great courage and conviction: “Depart from me, you evildoers.” They might be sceptical and doubleminded, but he did not want to be influenced by them. As Solomon wrote, “He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed” (Proverbs 13:20). Those who are devoted to the Lord avoid those who will hinder their devotion.

The Singleminded Are Humble

Next, we see that the singleminded are humble: “Uphold me according to Your word, that I may live; and do not let me be ashamed of my hope. Hold me up, and I shall be safe, and I shall observe your statutes continually” (vv. 116–117).

Those who are singlemindedly devoted to God are not brash or brazen. They understand how weak they are, and that is why they are devoted to the Lord. They therefore cling to God’s word with the realisation that only he can get them through their trials. As I read on a church website recently, we are weak, and so we pray a lot.

The Singleminded Are Reverent

Finally, those who are singleminded are reverently focused: “You reject all those who stray from your statutes, for their deceit is falsehood. You put away all the wicked of the earth like dross; therefore I love your testimonies. My flesh trembles for fear of you, and I am afraid of your judgements” (vv. 118–120).

The psalmist now speaks directly to God, and he expresses his reverent fear of the Lord. It is a fear not of terror (for there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus), but a deep sense of reverential awe. The more he learns God's word, the more he knows of God, and the more he knows of God, the more he reveres God. And it is this reverence that keeps him singleminded, for it drives him to love the Lord whom he reveres.

The psalmist knew that a day of judgement was coming. He wanted to receive the rewards promised to God's people so that he might, in new covenant term, cast those crowns at Jesus feet who, through his singlemindedness, saved those he came to save.

In the Gospel of Luke, we see a clear transition in chapter 9. From that point on, Jesus' sights are fixed on Jerusalem. Perhaps the swing is most clearly seen in Luke 9:51: "Now it came to pass, when the time had come for him to be received up, that he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." He was not doubleminded. He had come to earth to fulfil the Father's plan. He knew what that plan was, and where it would be carried out, and he singlemindedly set his mind to go where he needed to go.

He had come with his mind set firmly on his bride. For him to rescue her, and for her to be singlemindedly devoted to him, he first needed to singlemindedly go to death in Jerusalem. He fulfilled the words of Isaiah: "For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore I will not be disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed" (Isaiah 50:5). He knew that the Father would not let him be ashamed by leaving him in the grave. And he was right. He was not ashamed. His Father raised him from the dead, and because of that, we can be singlemindedly devoted to him. And, if we are, we too will not be ashamed.

AMEN