

Psalm 119:153-176

Rounding 3rd and headed home, lookin to land the plane tonight as it pertains to the 119th Ps! It's definitely been an incredible journey through this psalm as we've looked *at*, pondered *on* and been blown *away* by the wonder of the Word of God. As we've mentioned before that's (as you well know by now) what the 119th psalm is all about. It's the word all about the word; the power of the word, the pleasure of the word; the pain/persecution that will enter your life at times if you stay true to the word.

This psalm has been known to save life... True story about a 17th century Bishop of Edinburgh by the name of George Wishart. He had been taken, tried and condemned to death; there was a custom of the time that before a prisoner was executed they could choose a single psalm to be sung. As he was there preparing for his execution he chose psalm 119; before 2/3s of this psalm was sung, his pardon arrived and his life was spared. ☺ So never underestimate the power of God's word unto salvation ☺! It definitely has the power to save a man spiritually, but occasionally it might even save you physically!

If I were to sum up these 3 final sections of psalm 119 I would do so by saying that Vs 153-160 are a cry for deliverance and/or salvation (perhaps we could say rejuvenation), Vs 161-168 are a cry of praise and adulation/adoration (exaltation) and Vs 169-176 are summed up in 2 phrases #1 Hear me and #2 Help me.

Vs153-154

It's a point that we find ourselves thinking through and drawing attention to regularly; being a believer does not automatically shield me or grant me general amnesty from problems and or persecution in life. The psalmist wasn't living life in an ivory tower or some secluded bubble world whereby all he did all day long was study the bible. He lived a real life, he interacted with real people and experienced real affliction. So the cry of 153 is 2-fold, #1 Consider me and #2 Deliver me.

It's a great reminder; one that we do well to be encouraged through. Not only is God compassionate to *consider* us; it's through His mercy/His compassion that He considers our plight, our problems, our afflictions. He certainly doesn't owe us to consider us or look upon us with sympathy, yet as His children that's exactly what He does. However the good news doesn't end with God's compassion to consider us, we also serve a God who's well able to *deliver* us. We serve a God who is (as we sing, or as it says in Isaiah 63) "mighty to save." God isn't only capable of hearing our cry, He's able to deliver us as well from whatever plight, whatever problem or affliction may be plaguing us.

Now that doesn't mean He always will; His plan for us may involve more than simply the path of least resistance but we certainly don't want to stand guilty of having not because we're asking not (Jas 4:2)...

He goes on to say, "For I do not forget Your law". The idea here is that he wouldn't be moved by affliction to 2nd guess God's love for him. Some people are God's "fair weather" followers, they're only on board as long as the ride is smooth, as long as the path is "primrose", affliction drives them away from God (Mk 4:16-17) and away from His word. Others (like the psalmist) allow troubled times to actually drive them, draw them closer to God and to His word. They realize that God is their shelter, their shield; their fortress and ever present help in time of need; so they turn *to* Him and trust *in* Him and wisely so.

He says, "Plead my cause and redeem me." This phrase, "Plead my cause" is an acknowledgement of personal insufficiency and his desperate need for God to stand in the gap on his behalf. It's the language of a courtroom; he's asking God to be his defense attorney, his advocate. Of course the fulfillment of this would take place at the cross of Jesus Christ. It's there that Jesus entered the equation as our Kinsman Redeemer; He's the one who now represents us, defends us and mediates for us before the throne of God. This is that which John was talking about when he said, "*My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*" 1 John 2:1

“Revive me according to Your word.” Now as you know revival isn’t something that can happen for the nonbeliever. You can only be “revived” if you’ve been alive; the nonbeliever is dead in sin; they need to be born again, not revived. He’s calling out for a renewal; a rejuvenation of that 1st love relationship between him and his God. He realized the life that he needed was found in the word. The word of God is a source of revival (sometimes called a “re-bible”) because the word that feeds our inner man; it teaches us the need and the nature of prayer, repentance, dedication/consecration and how we need to seek after God with the whole of our heart.

True revival will always be according to the word of God; be it personal or in a corporate gathering. A genuine revival will honor and promote the word of God, there may be all kinds of other things that are called a “revival” but as you get out the measuring rod you need to size it up. “Is what’s happening here accord with the word of God?” “Is this according to God’s word?”

Vs155-156

Salvation for the wicked/ungodly is a non-option. “Salvation is far from the wicked” however the reason is rooted in the fact that they won’t seek the Lord, they won’t seek God through the word. The fact of the matter is that; that’s true of everyone of us apart from the grace of God. The bible is clear, “*There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.*” Romans 3:11

Therefore God seeks after us; and God took the initiative to reach out to all of mankind through the cross of Jesus Christ Now it’s up to man to respond to God’s initiative; the wicked refuse. They do not seek, therefore they shall not find (Jer 29:13).

However to those who seek; God’s tender mercies are *near*, salvation is *far* from the wicked, but the tender mercies of God are *near* to those who seek Him and cry out for them.

Vs157-160

I like the resolve of Vs 157, “Many are my persecutors and my enemies, yet I do not turn from Your testimonies”. It’s sorta like the 153rd Vs in that he’s purposed in his heart to follow the Lord no matter what. Nothing was going to drive him away. Regardless of how tough times got, no matter how many people would persecute him he refused to turn from the word of God. There are times when things will go great in your life as a believer, then there are other times when the waters are rough, circumstances will vary. The word of God remains constant; it’s like the anchor that holds us in place.

Again we note in Vs 159 that the psalmist asked God to consider his love for the Word, yet when it came to revival in his life he didn’t ask for it based upon his love for God’s word, or all the good deeds he’d done, (due to the fact that he somehow deserved it) but rather that God would revive him on the basis of His lovingkindness. Revival *in* our lives is the result of the lovingkindness of God poured *out* on our lives.

Vs 160 is worth underlining or drawing some sort of attention to. It’s a declaration of the infallible/eternal nature of the word of God. I’ve made mention of this before but I’m not sure that people say they believe in God but then doubt the bible are thinking clearly. (Well...I am sure that they’re not). But you can’t have a perfect/eternal/infallible God yet God’s word be imperfect, full of errors and temporary in nature. Because if God’s word isn’t perfect, that means God isn’t perfect; if what He says is fallible, that makes Him fallible. What the psalmist affirms here is that from cover to cover (Gen to Rev) God’s word is truth (not just that it’s true but that it’s truth). Not just portions *of* it, or concepts *from* it, but the *entirety* of it. As we read in the book of Proverbs, “Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.” Proverbs 30:5 In the NT Paul said it like this, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,” 2 Timothy 3:16 Now let’s take it one step farther, if it’s all *true*, than it can all be *trusted*...

Vs161-164

Again there in Vs 161 we see an unconditional appreciation and adoration of God’s Word. He loved God’s word be it good times or be it bad.

In the following Vs he begins to esteem the *value* of God’s word; rejoicing at the word like one who finds great treasure.

It's the picture (literally) of obtaining the spoils of war on the battlefield after a great battle. Now we don't wrestle flesh and blood, but powers, principalities, rulers of darkness in heavenly places and the word of God is like the reward of life. You've fought hard, here's the treasure obtained from the battlefield; he finds it precious, enriching to his life.

It's the difference between *price* and *value*, the book you hold in your hands that we call "The Bible" may've cost you very little in terms of price; but its value is more than all the riches of this world.

He goes on to say that he hates/abhors lying, but loves truth (the Word). Of course if you're going to love truth you have to hate the lie, there's not room in your heart for a balanced diet of both. It's as Paul said, "*Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.*" Rom 12:9

When he says that he praises God 7 times a day, though I suppose he could mean that literally more probably the idea there is that there's a consistency, a persistency in his praise. That he's just continually praising God throughout the day. It's like when Paul said that we're to pray with out ceasing; our lives are to be in communion with God persistently; there should be a constant availability to the Lord. So the question that really confronts us is, "Do we lead lives of praise to the Lord?" Spurgeon said concerning this Vs, "Do we praise god 7 times a day? Do we praise Him once in 7 days?" I read somewhere that a singing saint is a stable saint; if your life is filled with praise, odds are you're focused *on* thereby being rooted *in* the things of God.

Vs165-168

Few things in this passage that I want to draw to your attention; he mentions back in Vs 165 the peace that belongs to those who love the word of God. If you love God's word that means you trust God's word, if you trust the word you have peace through the promises of the word. Just a prayer can bring peace to our hearts (Phil 4:6-7), so can trust in the promises of the word of God. On top of that love for the word (which translates into obedience to the word, Jesus said, "if you love Me keep My commandments") keeps us from stumbling and creates stability in our lives. So if you're looking for stability and tired of stumbling; learn to have a love *for* and an obedience *to* the word of God. Remember it's the *doers* of the word who have a stable foundation (Jesus said [Matt7:24-25]), the hearer only, far from stable continually stumbles.

We notice in Vs 167 an important detail as it pertains to his obedience, it's not only a loyalty concerning his outward actions; but his inward intentions were rooted in honoring the Lord as well. His obedience was an overflow of his inward love and dedication to the Lord and to His word, "My *soul*" keeps your testimonies, I love them exceedingly.

Another motivation for his responsibility in keeping the word was rooted in accountability to God, notice (Vs 168, underline it) "all my ways are before You."

God was watching his life, just like He's watching your life, and my life even when we are deceived into thinking that no one else is. Like the soldiers who covered Christ's face and *then* began to beat Him, so often we think that God doesn't see, *then* we sin against Him. Believe me (believe the word of God) when I tell you, all your ways are before Him. The bible declares it over and over and over again, Psalms 44:20-21, "*If we had forgotten the name of our God, Or stretched out our hands to a foreign god, Would not God search this out? For He knows the secrets of the heart.*" Proverbs 5:21, "*For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, And He ponders all his paths.*" Jeremiah 23:24, "*Can anyone hide himself in secret places, So I shall not see him? says the Lord; Do I not fill heaven and earth? says the Lord.*" Here's one more, Hebrews 4:13, "*And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.*" Of course the entire 139th psalm is all about the fact that God searches us and knows us, how He's acquainted with all our ways and that there's no fleeing from His presence.

Perhaps it's with those kinds of thoughts in mind that he finishes out his psalm as we find his petitions gathering both force and fervency. God knows him; He's familiar *with* him, all his ways are *before* Him and now he petitions God that He might both *hear* him, and *help* him.

Vs169-170

"Let my cry come before You, Let my supplication come before You." Translation, "Hear me" "God I'm asking You to hear me; and to give understanding to me, to shape *my* world view through the lens of *Your* word." "I don't want to be conformed to this world, but I want to be *transformed* by the renewing of my mind, through Your word that I might prove out *Your will* in *my life*."

He says, “Deliver me according to Your word”, Jesus echoed that principle when He said, “...*you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*” John 8:32

Vs171-175

He’s asked God to *hear* him, now he’s asking God to *help* him. Back in Vs 171 he says, “My lips shall utter praise.” Question, what do your lips utter? All kinds of mouths utter all kinds of things, what makes us different, what is it that pours forth from our lips? Backbiting? Gossip, garbage; or things that are necessary for the building up and edification of the body, praise to our God? He says, “My lips shall utter praise, my tongue shall speak of Your word.” Why? Because God’s word is right, God’s word is righteous, it’s what we need.

You might draw attention/underline Vs 175. It encapsulates what I’ve read the Westminster shorter Catechism calls “the chief end of man,” namely, to glorify God and enjoy Him forever: “Let my soul live that I may praise you.” The 2nd question that catechism asks is, “What rule has God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him?” The answer is, “The Word of God” or as the psalmist says here, “Let Your judgments help me.”

I think it’s worth pointing out the psalmists love and dedication to the word of God didn’t make him more spiritually *independent*, but in reality it made him more keenly aware of his *absolute dependence* upon God.

Vs 176

We love the humility with which this psalm ends as the psalmist notes his own propensity to wander and his great need to have God continually seeking after him as the Good Shepherd. It strikes a chord in all of us because it’s something that rings true and resonates with in us all. We all (like sheep) have a tendency to go astray, we’re prone to wander and follow after our own way. But unlike a dog who may find their way back, sheep just keep going; need to be sought out and brought back. We thank God that Jesus is willing to seek us out and bring us back into the fold; if necessary; over and over and over again.

So the psalmist after all this illumination, adoration, exaltation and application of God's word realizes that apart from God's grace, apart from God doing the work; he can't hit the mark. He's not puffed up with pride over his tremendous knowledge of the word, he's brought low with humility; seeing his need for God so desperately. So to with you, and so to with me; not only do we need to learn to *love* the word of God, we need the grace of God, the Spirit of God to help us, to work through us that we might *live* the word of God...

Prayer Points:

God we're so thankful for Your faithfulness, for Your willingness to seek us out and bring us back even after our hearts so often wander; and stray from You. Jesus we thank You that You are the Good Shepherd and that You've laid down Your life for the sheep and we give You praise that You have caused the likes of us to be called, to be considered the sheep of *Your* hand. We thank You for hearing us, for helping us, for delivering us in our times of need. Help us to understand more fully the value of Your word; and revive us once again for the glory of Your name...