

## Psalm 119:1-16

As most of you are undoubtedly already aware the 119<sup>th</sup> psalm is the single longest chapter in the entire bible. There's speculation as to whether it was written at one time or compiled over a period of time in a person's life and put together. There's also speculation as to who it is who wrote this psalm. Most believe it was David, some believe it was Ezra, as I was reading what Warren Wiersbe had to say about it he believes it was possibly Jeremiah (of course he has reasons which he believes validates that even as others do for their position). In reality the human instrument is secondary at best. As with all the word of God its inspiration is of the Holy Spirit.

*Whoever* the human instrument was one thing I can tell you for sure is that he's a good example for you and me to follow as it pertains to his hunger for holiness and his passion for purity before God. He had it in his heart to know God and to know God's word. He wasn't satisfied with having God's word in his home, in his hands or even in his head, he longed to have the word of God rooted in his heart where it could help him to love that which was holy and do that which was right in the sight of God. In all but about 14 Vs (out of the 176) he addresses his words to the Lord personally so that what we have in this psalm is basically a combination of worship, prayer and praise along with an admonition or 2 along the way.

Now there is a unique feature to this psalm in that it is an acrostic psalm; and it's not that we haven't seen acrostic psalms before (a psalm whereby each line starts with the succeeding letter of the Hebrew alphabet) but this psalm maintains its pattern at a rhythm of 8 Vs at a time. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet so each line in the 1<sup>st</sup> 8 Vs begin with the 1<sup>st</sup> letter of the Hebrew alphabet "Aleph", the next 8 Vs begin with the 2<sup>nd</sup> letter "Beth" so on and so forth until all 22 letters are used in succession making for 176 Vs.

In all but a handful of Vs the word of God is mentioned directly in some way, shape or form. We'll see words like, "testimonies", "law", "judgments", "commandments", "statutes", "word", "precepts" and "ways" all of which refer to some facet of the word of God. and Though this psalm speaks to several aspects of the word there are 2 major themes that seem to surface more forcibly than any of the others; #1 why we should value the word of God and #2 how it is that we *demonstrate* that we value the word of God.

Of course it would seem to me that the primary reason we should esteem the word and value the word so highly is because it's in fact *God's* Word to us. God Himself has spoken to us, testified of Himself to us, has provided critical/essential guidance for us in this life. His word is likened to *water*, to a *treasure*, a *counselor*, a *light* and a *heritage* to name a few.

As important (and in some cases essential) as these things are the fact of the matter is that they pale in comparison to the eternal value of God's word to our inner man. The writer of this psalm had a grip on that reality and in turn esteemed God's word to the highest degree.

Vs1-2

Of course most of you realize that the word "blessed" more literally translated would be "Oh how happy". "Oh how happy are the undefiled in the way", who are those? Who are those who are undefiled in the way? Those "who walk in the law of the Lord"; those whose lives are led *by* and instructed *in* the word of God; now think about this because this is an assertion of strategic importance. The Holy Spirit here informs us that happiness is directly connected to the way we value the word of God and allow our lives to be conformed *to* it and transformed *by* it through our *obedience* to it.

The reason I point that out is because the world, Satan, and your flesh (my flesh) have done a tremendous job of convincing most of us that in reality just the opposite is true! Many see the word of God, the "law" and "testimonies" of God's word as being more detrimental to their happiness in tying them down; when the truth of the matter is that it's the word of God that sets us free. We're slaves to sin. It's the Son of God, through the word of God by the power of the Spirit of God who sets us free and gives us true joy. In reality we'd do well to learn what it means to live in God's word and allow the word of God to live in us.

Most are deceived into believing that if we can't in some way defile ourselves than we're not going to have any fun and our lives will be boring at best. But as one commentator pointed out "The reason we are not happy is that we sin, and the main reason we sin as much as we do is that we do not know the Bible well enough. . . . Apart from being instructed by God, human beings do not know how to achieve happiness." (Boice)

The blessed life is the blameless life, the one who is undefiled in the way, the one who walks according to the word of God; who keeps God's word and seeks God's face (Vs 2) with the whole heart. That word "seek" in Vs 2 could also be understood as "worship" "Who *worship* Him with the whole heart". The one who lives blamelessly and seeks/worships God wholeheartedly will be blessed. In the 1<sup>st</sup> psalm we read it like this, "*Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.*" Psalms 1:1-3 In the book of Revelation we read it like this, "*Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.*" Revelation 22:14 Sunday morning we were talking about the critical need to be a doer and not a hearer only of the word if we're to have a strong and stable spiritual life. Here we're finding that our obedience shouldn't happen legalistically but whole-heartedly.

Charles Spurgeon said this, "God is not truly sought by the cold researches of the brain: we must seek him with the heart. Love reveals itself to love: God manifests his heart to the heart of his people. It is in vain that we endeavour to comprehend him by reason; we must apprehend him by affection."

Vs3-4

In Vs 4 the psalmist goes from speaking about the "Blessed man" generally to addressing the Lord personally and in reality it turns at this point to prayer throughout the remainder of the psalm.

But we read here that we're *commanded* to keep God's precepts diligently. Why? Because it honors the Lord? Absolutely but then beyond that it's because God wants to bless your life and the path to blessing lies in the way of obedience to His word. Obedience to the word of God will place you under the "spout" where the blessings come out.

People often times envision God blessing at times and with holding blessing at other times. It seems to me more accurate to understand it as the fact that God is always blessing, however we're not always in a place to receive those blessings. We remove ourselves out from underneath the "spout" where the blessings come out through disobedience, or self seeking, pride or any # of things that don't accord with keeping His word and seeking His face. God's not the One who varies in the equation, we are. God wants us to live in Vs 1-2 He wants us to have a blessed life; but that's the result of our staying true to Vs 4.

Vs 3 is kind of further exposition on the 1<sup>st</sup> 2 Vs, the one who's seeking God's face and keeping His word will (to the negative) do no iniquity and (to the positive) walk in His ways. There is a purity and a righteousness about their lives...

Vs5-6

This is one of the reasons that I love the word of God. Because the characters that are in it, the individuals whose lives are on display through it are as human as you are and I am. In the 1<sup>st</sup> 4 Vs it's like he proposes the divine ideal; "This is where it's at, this is a life that's blessed, that's blameless; that's seeking God's face and keeping God's word." Then when we get to Vs 5 he's like, "Oh that I were like that; that's so where I want to *be* yet it's what I fall so short *of*."

He's bearing witness of that which Jesus would say when He said, "*I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.*" John 15:5 When he looks into the word of God and compares that to what he sees in his life he feels ashamed; he knows he's not hitting the mark. He feels like Paul in Rom Ch 7. What he wills to do he doesn't do and what he doesn't want to do, that he does. Of course Jesus is the only One who was able to look into the law of the Lord and have the confidence of keeping it perfectly. As for the rest of us we fall short radically... But it's our heart's cry to be directed to keep the Lord's statutes, we want *our lives* to accord with *His word*.

Vs7-8

He didn't just want to go through the motions but have a life all askew. He wanted to praise God with "uprightness of heart" and he knew that could only happen if he had an accurate grasp of the word of God. God has prescribed in His word how it is that we're to worship Him. We don't have the right to honor God any way we feel the need.

If we truly want to honor Him and worship Him appropriately than it behooves us to learn of Him so as to praise Him with uprightness, or with a proper heart.

Again in Vs 8 it's like a conceding to the fact that the only way this will happen (that He will honor God and praise God and keep the word of God) is if God does the work in his life. He has a longing to do the right thing yet he recognizes his inability to do it apart from the Lord. If God were to forsake him he'd be lost; so to with you, so to with me...

Vs9

Now when we read Vs 9 it begins with one of those questions that cause (or should cause) our ears to perk up because it's so relevant to each and every human life. None of us like the feeling of being overwhelmed with shame, or the weight of feeling dirty all the time resting upon us. We long to be clean, to be rid of the guilt and shame of our sin; but how can that happen? How can I know that my life and my lifestyle is righteous and/or acceptable before God?

It's interesting that he points to the problems relevant in a *young man's* life. It's not that what he says isn't a truism for *everyone's* life, but I think that it points to the fact that more so than probably any other demographic the propensity to fall into sin lies in the *young men*. There are challenges that face a young man that (not categorically but perhaps generally) are a little more intense than what might be present in other ages or even the opposite gender. The natural tendency of the young man isn't to lead a life of purity but rather to explore the depths of depravity.

Even the world encourages you to "sow your wild oats" while you're young and when you get a little older you can settle down and get religious. But "get it out of your system now" they say. But God wants your life from the very beginning, now He'll take us whenever He can get us, but He doesn't want you to squander your youth, your strength and your vitality in sin; He wants you to use it for the glory of His kingdom. Not to mention if God gets your hearts when you're young He gets to spare you the chains and the bondage of sin that scars so many of us. When it mentions cleansing his "way" that word "way" speaks of a "well trodden road" or a "rut" it's speaking of a lifestyle, ungodly patterns and such. It's when you're young that you begin to dig the grooves that will make the tracks for the rest of your life; that's when God wants your heart in His hands.

So he isolates the young man almost as if to say, “If it’s sufficient for the young man it’s sufficient for us all.” But here’s the deal, a life of moral purity doesn’t happen haphazardly or accidentally. We gravitate naturally toward the flesh, toward impurity. We’ve got to *take heed* (that’s an act of the will) to God’s word. That is we have to safeguard the word of God in our heart and act upon it accordingly. It’s God’s word that will renew our minds and transform our lives.

It’s through the word of God that we’re born again; that we’re shown the standard of purity, the reasons for purity, the difficulties and blessings of purity. It’s through the word of God that we’re empowered by the Spirit of God so as to *be* pure, and should we fall God’s word gives us a refuge from condemnation and teaches us to repent and come back to a pure life.

#### Vs10

Vs 9 addresses the outward problem; Vs 10 unveils the inward solution. It always comes down to the matter of the heart. This is how God would have us to seek Him, He’s not interested in some of our heart, or a part of our heart, He wants it all and refuses to be satisfied with anything less. Jeremiah 29:13 “*And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.*” I like the fact that the psalmist declares his dedication while at the same time recognizing his inability to maintain that position apart from God’s work in His life. “Let me not wander”. He recognizes his dependence *upon* the Lord if he’s to live dedicated *to* the Lord.

#### Vs11

If this Vs isn’t underlined in your bible make it so. The word of God is the agent used by the Spirit of God to steer us clear *of* sin and to cleanse our lives *from* sin; it’s the power of God against sin in our lives. Remember Jesus said, “*You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.*” John 15:3 One has said that a heart that’s stored up with the word is the antidote to sin.

When he speaks of God's word "hidden" in his heart the word means more literally to "guard" to "esteem" or to "prioritize". Here's the idea; if I'm not tucking God's word away in my heart by what means then am I to discern that which is and that which isn't pleasing to the Lord? What's the measure I use? What's the standard I apply that helps me to realize when I am or am not sinning against Him? Just whatever feels right? Listen more often than not what feels right is completely wrong! Our hearts are wicked and deceitful, the flesh fights hard for gratification on any level; we need God's word to guide us, to instruct us and be a light unto our path, a lamp unto our feet.

Vs12-14

So we have a little progression here, "God, You teach me and I will declare Your word; and live according to Your ways." This is what we all need, we need the Lord to instruct us in His word, not just come to the place whereby we have it down academically, but that it's a part of our lives, and in our hearts intimately; God has instructed us personally.

It's not enough to have God's word merely in our minds; it needs to be coming forth from our mouths, edifying others and glorifying God.

He says, "I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches." Here's something we all need to stop and soberly consider; how valuable (truly) is the word of God to me, to you? What would it take for you to deny yourself to every hear of or read from the word of God again? What's your price? Job said, "*I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth More than my necessary food.*" Job 23:12 What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his own soul; or what would a man give in exchange for his soul?

Heaven and earth will pass away but the word of God will never by no means pass away. This world has temporary value to offer you at best, the word of God is eternal in its value; the word of God is to be valued more than all the riches that this world has to offer.

Vs15-16

This is the key (it seems to me) to having that transition take place whereby the word of God permeates and penetrates our being going from our mind, from our head down into our heart. It happens through meditation and contemplation upon the word. Thinking upon it, marinating in it; somehow in and through that it makes its way from being only in our head on down into our heart.

Real quick I want to make a distinction between say Eastern Meditation and what the bible speaks of when it uses the word “Meditation”. Because they’re 2 totally different things. When the world speaks of meditation the idea is that of totally emptying your mind that you might begin to connect with or aspire to a “god consciousness”, just opening yourself up to whatever may happen, receiving the positive energy or whatever. As believers/Christians when *we* speak of meditation it’s quite the opposite, far from emptying your mind we want to fill our minds with the word of God; and sort of “chew” on it, think about it and glean insight from it. Ask ourselves what God meant by that, seek the Lord in prayer that He might take us deeper concerning that verse, or that passage or whatever the case may be. So as to where the world wants to empty their minds, the Christian wants to fill his/her mind with the word of God.

I will “delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.”

Prayer Points:

Father help us to find our delight in Your statutes; help us to be mindful of Your word. To meditate on it and contemplate the principles found *in* it. Direct our ways to keep Your statutes and may we take heed *to* your word, keeping hold *of* Your word in our hearts. Teach us to heed it, and to be obedient to it.