

Psalm 119: For The Love Of Scripture!

Psalm 119:17-24

First a little review:

You may already know that Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible. This psalm is uniquely arranged for easier memorization. Each of its twenty-two stanzas is an acrostic comprised of eight verses, and each of these stanzas is preceded by a letter from the Hebrew alphabet. These letters each have phonetic meaning and suggest a theme for each respective section. Each of the eight verses begins with the same Hebrew letter.

Thus far we have studied three Hebrew letters and their corresponding eight-verse stanzas:

ALEPH refers to God the Father, or the oneness of God.

BETH literally means *house*, in the context of cleansing one's self/house.

GIMEL literally means *benefactor*, in the context of reward and punishment, and our subsequent freedom to choose either.

Psalms 119:17

(KJV) GIMEL. Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.

(NIV) Be good to your servant while I live, that I may obey your word.

How Father God deals with us as children and servants directly affects our heart obedience. The word "bountifully" from the KJV translation accurately communicates the extravagant grace with which God deals with His children, such that they may delight in obeying and serving Him. It is also accurate to say that *He is good to us!*

In addition to His extravagant grace, God extends mercy unto us.

From Webster's Dictionary:

MER'CY, n. [L. misericordia.]

1. That benevolence, mildness or tenderness of heart which disposes a person to overlook injuries, or to treat an offender better than he deserves; the disposition that tempers justice, and induces an injured person to forgive trespasses and injuries, and to forbear punishment, or inflict less than law or justice will warrant. In this sense, there is perhaps no word in our language precisely synonymous with mercy. That which comes nearest to it is grace. It implies benevolence, tenderness, mildness, pity or compassion, and clemency, but exercised only towards offenders. Mercy is a distinguishing attribute of the Supreme Being. The Lord is long-suffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty. Num 14.
2. An act or exercise of mercy or favor. It is a mercy that they escaped. I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies. Gen 32.
3. Pity; compassion manifested towards a person in distress. And he said, he that showed mercy on him. Luke 10.

4. Clemency and bounty. Mercy and truth preserve the king; and his throne is upheld by mercy. Prov 28.
5. Charity, or the duties of charity and benevolence. I will have mercy and not sacrifice. Mat 9.
6. Grace; favor. 1 Cor 7. Jude 2.
7. Eternal life, the fruit of mercy. 2 Tim 1.
8. Pardon. I cry thee mercy with all my heart.
9. The act of sparing, or the forbearance of a violent act expected. The prisoner cried for mercy. To be or to lie at the mercy of, to have no means of self-defense, but to be dependent for safety on the mercy or compassion of another, or in the power of that which is irresistible; as, to be at the mercy of a foe, or of the waves.

Hebrews 4:16

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

James 2:13

For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

Luke 6:36 *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.*

Beloved, rejoice and understand that God dispenses His gifts of grace and mercy that we may respond with obedience from thankful hearts. Amen!

Now if God were to regard and treat us without grace and mercy, our obedience would become forced religious duty and ritual - cold of heart, and cut off from God:

Isaiah 29:13

The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on merely human rules they have been taught.

We need God's grace and mercy to keep His Word; the oppression of religion and legalism crushes our capacity to love God and His Word.

Matthew 23:1-6

Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples. "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat," he said. "So, you must obey them. Do everything they tell you. But don't do what they do. They don't practice what they preach. They tie up heavy loads and put them on other people's shoulders. But they themselves aren't willing to lift a finger to move them. "Everything they do is done for others to see. On their foreheads and arms they wear little boxes that hold Scripture verses. They make the boxes very wide. And they make the tassels on their coats very long. "They love to sit down in the place of honor at dinners. They also love to have the most important seats in the synagogues.

Psalms 119:18

(KJV) Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

(NIV) Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.

What a wonderful verse to pray before your devotional and study times! Beloved how we need the illumination of the Holy Ghost to comprehend God's Word in the most transformative way, that we would obey it and please God (Romans 12:2). Apostle Paul was a scholar and zealous for the letter of the law before encountering Jesus on the road to Damascus. But his heart was legalistic and murderous:

Acts 9:1-6

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

After Paul encountered Jesus, and was broken and humbled and repentant, then and only then was God able to open Paul's eyes to the reality of his pride, rage, and hatred toward Jesus and His followers. And more than that, Paul became zealous for the spirit of the law and the Gospel.

Act 9:7-22

The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything. In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight." "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name." But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?" Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah.

Jesus makes it's very clear in Matthew 5 that it is possible to *interpret* Scripture with a heart of stone, completely disconnected from God, and without the help of the Holy Ghost:

Mat 5:17-20

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

But He also made it clear that it is impossible to obey the Scriptures apart from being born again and being filled with His Spirit:

Here He is speaking to Nicodemus, a teacher of the law:

John 3:1-3

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

How much more do we need to be born again to understand Scripture through the illumination of the Holy Ghost and possess the power to obey it?

Romans 8:1-4

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Dear Christian, this is the only acceptable and pleasing way to honour God in our Bible study!

Matthew 5:48 *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

*STUDY POINT: Take another look at Acts 9:1-22. Write down in two separate columns what Paul's life was like before He met Jesus and after. Comment on this transformation.

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: Recall your own life before accepting Jesus and after. Any similarities to Paul's radical spiritual transformation? How was your experience different? Why do you think it is important to note and remember such details?

Psalms 119:19

(KJV) *I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me.*

(NIV) *I am a stranger on earth; do not hide your commands from me.*

By now in your walk with Jesus, you know that this earth is not your home, that you have been set apart as sons and daughters of the Living God, set apart for His delight, His witness, and His glory:

1Peter 2:9-12

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

2Corinthians 6:14-18

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

Therefore our understanding of Scripture is rooted wholly in our relationship with God, through Jesus Christ, who reside in heaven. This is an amazing truth!

Mat 11:25-26

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.

Psalms 119:20

(KJV) My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times.

(NIV) My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times.

At the time of this writing, it is winter of 2021, and I can't think of another time when we as a world and we as a church have needed the Lord and His unchanging Word more than we do today. Pray: *Oh, Father in heaven, give us the same longing for Your Word that this psalmist has in this verse. Show us our need for You and Your Word. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Psalm 63:1 A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.

O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is

Psalms 119:21

(KJV) Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments.

(NIV) You rebuke the arrogant, who are accursed, those who stray from your commands.

Beloved, there are those - and note well there are many - who have rejected God and His Son Jesus, to whom the Word of God is an affront to their own self-will and self-righteousness:

Proverbs 6:16-19

These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

Perhaps I don't need to remind you of this, but I am compelled to preach it - stay clear of the influence of the proud-hearted who reject God and His ways!

Psalm 1:1-6

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Psalms 119:22

(KJV) Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies.

(NIV) Remove from me their scorn and contempt, for I keep your statutes.

Don't you love how Scripture confirms Scripture?

1Corinthians 15:33 *Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."*

Psalm 1:1-2

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

Psalms 119:23

(KJV) Princes also did sit and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.

(NIV) Though rulers sit together and slander me, your servant will meditate on your decrees.

While your family, friends, coworkers, classmates, and acquaintances may reject you and your Saviour, you can stay in the Word as the psalmist does here. And we as the Body of Christ across all the nations may be rejected, persecuted, or killed because we proclaim Him and His Word, but we also can stay in the Word. The Word will outlast the world:

Matthew 24:35 *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*

Hallelujah!

Read Psalm 2 here, and tell me Who really has the victory over the nations:

Psalm 2:1-12

Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

It is so important for you to remember that whether you are a missionary in a hostile foreign land preaching the Gospel to unbelievers, or witnessing to the embittered on the street - no one can steal the Word of God from you when it is hidden in Your heart. *No one.*

Joshua 1:8

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

Psalm 1:2-3

But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Psalm 119:11 *Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*

Psalms 119:24

(KJV) *Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.*

(NIV) *Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors.*

The Bible does teach that there is value in having many counsellors:

Proverbs 15:22

Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.

Pastors, lay people and spiritual mentors - *councillors* - can be trusted to the extent that they lovingly and skillfully minister the Word of God. Ultimately, brothers and sisters, you still need to test all counsel with prayer and your always ready and reliable counsellors - the unchanging Word of God!

- Reverend Darren McClelland