

Psalm 119 Introduction, Part 2
ABC 3/25/18

We've all seen the appeals from relief organizations with pictures of starving kids from some poverty-stricken nation. It's sad that people are starving when there's an abundance of food in the world to feed them. But I wonder, if God could take a snapshot of your spiritual condition, would you look like those children, spiritually starved for the food your soul needs & that is found in His Word? If so, it's especially sad, because we all own Bibles. Usually what's lacking with a person who is spiritually malnourished is the motivation to feed himself. I pray that our time in Ps 119 will motivate us all to feed from God's Word more than we currently do. Ps 119 shows us that the Word of God should have top priority in our lives. If you have your Bibles, turn there with me. If you weren't here last week, we read all 176 vss of this Psalm. Then we briefly looked at the overall content of it. After our 2 week introduction, we'll spend 22 weeks looking at this psalm. Why 22 weeks? Because Ps 119 is broken down according to letters of the Hebrew alphabet. We find an 8 vs section for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. If we were looking at this psalm in Hebrew, we'd see that each of the lines of each of the 8 vs stanzas begin with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. That's how the psalm is organized. We've also seen that this is a psalm all about God's Word. It's a reflection in the Word about the Word. Today, what I want to do as we look at the grand themes of this psalm is ask & answer 2 questions: 1. Why should we value the Word of God? 2. How should we value the Word of God? It seems to me that Psalm 119 is very much about these 2 things. After we pray, we'll go to a number of vss illustrating both of these points. PRAY

1. Why We Value God's Word Why should we value the Word of God? Because the only way we can know God is through the revelation of Himself through His Word. God is Spirit & those who worship Him must worship Him in Spirit & in truth (Jn 4:23). One of the things that means is we can't worship Him unless He reveals Himself to us. How do you get to know the Almighty God? However God decides to let you get to know Him! You can't get to know God the way you get to know someone in your class or who you work with. You get to know them by walking up to them & talking with them. But how do you get to know God unless He decides to let you get to know

Him? & God has revealed Himself to us by His Word. It's the only way we can truly know Him. Of course, all mankind knows there is a God because God's revealed Himself through His creation (Ps 19) & through man's innate knowledge of right & wrong (Rom 1). But God has, by His own choice, not only spoken to us revealing Himself to us through prophets & through apostles & especially through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Word made flesh (Jn 1:14). He's also written down that Word in the Scriptures so we may know Him, know about Him, & know how to live. God's Word should be valued because it's the way we know God, know about God, know the way of salvation, & know the way to live. Ps 119 celebrates that with a number of striking images that indicate to us how valuable God's Word is. We're going to walk through these briefly. The psalmist calls God's Word...

A. Treasure/Riches Vs 14 says, **I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As much as in all riches.** This is repeated in vs 72. **The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold & silver pieces.** & again in vs 127. **Therefore I love Your commandments above gold, yes, above fine gold.** vs 162 tells us, **I rejoice at Your Word, As one who finds great spoil.** So the Word of God is like a treasure to someone who has stumbled upon gold or riches of great value. It is something that's highly valued. The Word is also called a ...

B. Counselor Look at vs 24. **Your testimonies are also my delight; they are my counselors.** I'm sure we've all experienced being in desperate need for wise counsel from someone else. We all need wise people we can turn to who give us godly guidance & counsel. Psalm 119 says the Word of God is our counselor. It guides us. It's something that's valuable.

C. Song In vs 54 the Word of God is compared to a song. **Your statutes are my songs In the house of my pilgrimage.** In the hard places of life sometimes a song can lift your spirits & give you encouragement when you're discouraged or you need endurance or you need energy or you need a better perspective or you need hope. & here, the psalmist says the Word of God is like a song. Songs sometimes speak to us in ways we don't expect. So does God's Word so value it like a song.

D. Honey In vs 103 we're told the Word of God is like honey. **How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!** The Word of God is like that delightful taste of honey (or whatever your own personal favorite sweet treat is, just not chocolate!) You crave it's goodness & long to have it. You hide it & hoard it because it's valuable to you.

E. Light In vs 105 the psalmist calls the Word of God light. **Your Word is a lamp to my feet & a light to my path.** & then in vs 130 we read, **The unfolding of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.** Have you ever been in a dark place & you couldn't see what you were trying to see because there was no light? Our thermostat at home is now unreadable to me without the help of glasses & light. I have to turn on the hall light & put my glasses on so I can see the thermostat & turn it down or off. The Word of God is like a light. It enables us to see & so the psalmist celebrates & values it. God's Word is our source of light. It shows us the path of God's wisdom so we don't have to whack our shins in the dark. Besides likening God's Word to treasure, a counselor, a song, honey, & light, the psalmist also compares it to an ...

F. Inheritance Look at vs 111. **I have inherited your testimonies forever, For they are the joy of my heart.** When we think of inheritances we usually think of them as being valuable. Inheriting debt isn't all that great. God has given us the inheritance of His own Words reflecting His thoughts & being. How valuable is that?!

Is a treasure valuable? Yes. Is a counselor valuable to us? Of course. Is a song valuable to us? Honey? Light? An inheritance? All of these things are pictures or glimpses of the value of God's Word in which He reveals Himself to us. They're all ways the psalmist indicates to us why we should value the Word of God. The Word of God is the way He's revealed Himself to us. & is that revelation of Himself to us valuable? Yes! It's like a treasure, a counselor, a song, honey, light, & an inheritance.

G. Synonyms Another way the psalmist makes clear how valuable God's Word is to us is by using different names for that Word & those different names are designed to remind us of different ways in which that Word is valuable. Last week we touched on this but as you read this psalm

you see it called a number of different things. If you have a transcript of last week's sermon you saw all the occurrences of these different words highlighted in some manner.

Law (in Hebrew, "torah," Strong's #8451)
Testimony (in Hebrew, "edah" or "eduth," Strong's #5713 & #5715)
Precept (in Hebrew, "piqqud," Strong's #6490)
Statute (in Hebrew, "choq" or "chuqqah," Strong's #2706 & #2708)
Commandment (in Hebrew, "mitzvah," Strong's #4687)
Ordinance or Judgment (in Hebrew, "mishpat," Strong's #4941)
Word (in Hebrew, "dabar," Strong's #1697)
Word (in Hebrew, "imrah," Strong's #565)
Way (in Hebrew, "derek" or "orach," Strong's #1870 & #734)
Path (in Hebrew, "nathiyb," Strong's #5410)

While they may have shared & overlapping qualities, they're each describing a component of what we refer to as *God's Word* or the *Bible*.

Law – Although the Pentateuch, the 1st 5 books of the Bible, are formally referred to as *The Torah*, the word *torah* itself means teaching or instruction. Used 25x in Psalm 119, God provides His instruction & personal teaching on how to live & serve Him. One of its primary functions is to instruct us so that we **may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left** (Dt 17:20). The **law** reveals God's will for how His people are to live. Since it comes from God, the **law** isn't just for academic interest, but for obedience.

Testimony – Used 22x, a **testimony** can be best thought of as eye witness testimony. It comes from a root word meaning to bear witness. It points to the dependability of the Bible as a witness of the things of God. It also can have the nuance of a warning.

Precept – Used 21x, it comes from a word meaning to oversee or pay close attention to or to inspect something. It was used of an officer or overseer, one who is responsible to look closely into a situation & take action. It points to the instructions of the Lord in all its details.

Statute – Used 22x, this comes from a word meaning to engrave in stone. A **statute** speaks of the binding force & permanence of Scripture. It's a task or boundary given by God. These are things required of us.

Commandment – Also used 22x in Ps 119, a **commandment** points to the authority of what is said. It has the idea of giving orders. A **commandment** is what God has spoken which details the responsibilities of human beings when they live in a relationship with Him. Especially in the OT,

commandments defined how Israel was to live in a relationship with God. God specifically stated that those who **keep My commandments** are **those who love Me** (Ex 20:6; Dt 5:10), which Jesus also said (Jn 14:15, 21, 23-24; 15:9-10). John writes this:

By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," & does not keep His commandments, is a liar, & the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked (1 Jn 2:3-6).

Ordinance or **Judgment** – Used 20x, an **ordinance** or **judgment** is what we might call in legal terms, *case law*. It has the idea of justice rooted in God's very character. These are the decisions of the all-wise Judge about human situations. These are the verdicts, outcomes, or formal decrees based on resolving a situation brought before the court.

Word (dabar) – Used 23x is the most general term of all, emphasizing the fact that God has spoken.

Word (imrah) – Used 19x, is similar to the one just mentioned. It's derived from the verb *to say* & may sometimes have the nuance of a promise. The NT equivalent is the Greek word *logos*.

Way – Used 7x, a **way** is derived from a word referring to a well-travelled path or road. Here it refers to God's characteristic manner of acting. It's the course which God reveals as right.

Path – Used just a couple of times & is very similar to **way**. It literally means a well-trodden trail or beaten track.

God's Word to us, His revelation of Himself to us, His speaking to us, is called the Word or God's instruction to us, & thereby His instruction is valuable. All of these words are designed to convey how precious, how helpful, how useful, how valuable God's Word is to us. So why should we value the Word of God? Because of what it is. We see in this psalm what the Word of God is in at least a couple of ways. We see what it's called & what it's compared to. So as we study this psalm, pay attention to what the Word of God is called & notice what it's compared to & meditate on them. By doing this you'll gain God's truth from your own study of this psalm. Spurgeon says that at 1st glance of Ps 119 it's easy to think it's repetitive & superficial. But the closer you look & the more you meditate on it, the more you realize the psalmist isn't just repeating himself but is actually

meditating on what the Word of God is. Spurgeon goes on to encourage us to do the same. All of us ought to get to know this psalm & meditate on it because the psalm itself is indicating the richness & value of God's Word.

2. How to Value God's Word This psalm not only tells us why we should value the Word of God, it gives us specific ways as to how we can value the Word of God. We don't study the Bible to win trivia games. Nor do we study it simply to learn & follow it's moral teachings, although we should do that. We study the Bible to seek God Himself. I want to mention 5 ways this psalm tells us how we can value the Word of God.

A. Study We value the Word of God by studying it. Look at vs 2. **Blessed are those who observe His testimonies, Who seek Him with all their heart.** In fact, if you look at vss 2-10, over-&-over the theme of studying the Word of God comes about. He writes in vs 6 of **looking upon God's commandments.** In vs 9 by **keeping it according to Your word.** Vs 10 of **seeking God with his whole heart & not wandering from God's commandments.** vs 11 speaks of storing up & treasuring the word of God in our hearts. All of these are examples of diligently studying the Word of God. We study the Word of God because God reveals Himself to us it. We seek Him through His Word. This is how we show we truly value God's Word. We study it. Secondly, we...

B. Obey it. We study it but it goes deeper than that. We also obey it. In vs 1, **Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord.** Vs 3, **They also do no unrighteousness; They walk in His ways.** It's not just about learning the Word; it's about living the Word. It's about practicing what we learn. It's not just head knowledge, it's heart knowledge as we obey God's commandments. That's one of the ways we show we value the Word of God. Over & over it's emphasized that the Word of God isn't simply something to be known, it's something to be lived. & so this psalm emphasizes that we learn the Bible by living it & as we live the Bible we learn it. There's an experiential aspect to knowing the Word of God & so one way we show that we value the Word of God is to follow & obey it.

C. Treasure/Store Up 3rd, we treasure God's Word. Vs 11 says, **Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You.** We store up the Word of God; we hide it in our hearts. This

deals especially with meditating on & memorizing portions of God's Word, treasuring it so that it begins to control the way we think, act, speak, & live. Dwight Moody once said, *The only way to keep a broken vessel full is by keeping the faucet turned on.*¹ Keeping the faucet of God's Word running repeatedly through your mind will clear out the garbage & make you think right about things.

D. Declare 4th, we show we value the Word of God by declaring it. Look at vs 13. **With my lips I have told of all the ordinances of Your mouth.** We don't just keep it to ourselves, we share its message. We declare it to others. We speak it out loud. The study of the Word of God so burns in our hearts that we have to speak about it & that's another way we show we value God's Word.

E. Rejoice Finally, we rejoice over it. Vss 14-16 say, **I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As much as in all riches. I will meditate on Your precepts & regard Your ways. I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word.** It isn't simply a matter of study & knowledge, it's a matter of delight & joy. We rejoice over it. We can't help but to delight in it. In all of these ways we show we truly value the Word of God.

3. What God's Word Does What does the Word of God do when we know it's valuable & we do these things that show we value it? There are 6 things I want to mention quickly.

A. Blessedness 1st, the Word of God brings blessedness. Blessedness is connected with our knowing & valuing & keeping the Word of God. Look at vss 1-2. **How blessed are those whose way is blameless, Who walk in the law of the LORD. How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, Who seek Him with all their heart.** *Blessedness* means happiness & so the psalmist is saying something important. He's saying if you really want to know true, deep happiness in this life, you must go to the Word of God. That's important because we think if we want to be happy & joyful we need to do what we want to do. But the Word of God says the way to happiness isn't to do what you want to do, it's to do what God wants you to do. Especially to conform your desires so that what you want to do is what God wants you to do. That's where real blessedness is. & so the psalmist emphasizes that the Word of God brings blessedness. Satan & the world

¹ <https://lanecorley.com/tag/sermon-notes/>

want to convince you the opposite is true, that the only way you can really have happiness is to do it your way & follow your own instincts & urges. But the psalmist makes it very clear that real happiness in this life doesn't come from those who just decide they're going to do it their own way. It comes from those who say, *I want to desire to do what God would have me to do & be.*

B. Protection God's Word isn't just connected to blessedness, it also brings protection. Look at vs 9 & 11 say, **How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word.... Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.** The psalmist specifically mentions the protecting power of the Word of God. As we meditate on, study, & embrace the Word of God, it protects us from wrongdoing. God's Word not only brings blessing, it brings protection.

C. Freedom It brings freedom as well. Vs 45 says, **I will walk at liberty, For I seek Your precepts.** That's an interesting vs. *I'm going to walk at liberty, literally, in a wide place, because I seek God's precepts.* That's not how we normally think, is it? We think God wants to squeeze us into a narrow alley because we can't do this or that. But the psalmist tells us that following God's commands leads us into the great wide open. Satan tempts us to believe that sin is what brings us freedom. But the psalmist says it's the other way around. If you want to experience freedom, you have to love God's Word. You have to obey God's Word. You have to study God's Word. That's the only thing that really gives you freedom. Why? Because in the Bible, freedom isn't getting to do whatever you want to do. In the Bible, freedom is wanting to do what God made you to do & wanting to be what God made you to be. The only way you can have that kind of freedom, which is the only true freedom, is to be in the Word, guided by the Word, know the Word, love the Word, & have the Word transform the way you think & live (Rom 12:2).

D. Direction It gives blessedness, it gives protection, it gives freedom. It also gives direction. Look at vs 105 with me. **Your Word is a lamp to my feet & a light to my path.** We've talked about the aspect of it being light & a lamp but what's a lamp for? To show us or guide us on the proper path. We live in a perplexing world. What we ought to do is sometimes dark to us but the Word of

God provides illumination. It gives guidance. God's Word is our source of light. It shows us the path of God's wisdom so we don't step on the Legos the world has left lying around in the dark.

E. Discernment In connection with this, it also does a 5th thing. It gives us discernment. Not only does it give us guidance or direction, it gives us discernment. Look at vs 130. **The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.** We all need discernment & understanding. We gain discernment, wisdom, & insight because our nose is in God's Word continuously & it flows through our life. We, who are simple, can be made wise by the Word of God. We need to see life through the lens of God's Word. This brings **understanding** to us.

F. Revive God's Word also revives us. While the psalmist, in NT terminology, is already born again, he recognizes that the Word of God is the source of spiritual life & vitality. Look at vs 25. **My soul cleaves to the dust; Revive me according to Your word.** We all need to be constantly revived & this psalm speaks of that often (37, 50, 88, 93, 107, 144, 149, 154, 156, 159). **Revive** means to cause to live. If the psalmist needed ongoing revival, how much more do we! The source of such revival is ongoing contact with God through His life-giving Word. If you know Christ as your Savior, but are going through a difficult or dry time, seek God through His Word. God will use it to **revive** you. If you don't yet know Christ, read His Word (John is a good place to start) & ask God to reveal Himself to you. He will & you'll be born again to a living hope. There is life-giving power in the Word, because it brings a person into a living relationship with the living God.

George Wishart reportedly experienced literal life-giving from Ps 119. He was the bishop of Edinburgh in the 17th century & was condemned to death. While on the scaffold he made use of a custom that allowed the condemned to choose one psalm to be sung before they were killed. He chose Ps 119. Before it was finished, a pardon arrived & his life was spared. Good thing he didn't choose Ps 117!

The psalmist is saying the Bible not only brings blessedness, the Word of God not only brings protection, it not only gives freedom, it not only gives direction, it also gives discernment & understanding, & it revives us. You want freedom, you want blessing, you want protection, you want direction, you want discernment, you want revival? Where do you go to get it? The Word of God, the Bible. This psalm meditates deeply on why we should value the Word of God & how we

go about showing that we value the Word of God, & what the Word of God does in the life of a believer. To benefit from the Word, we must be diligent in at least 3 responsibilities:

1. We must learn God's Word God doesn't automatically zap us with knowledge of His Word. We must apply ourselves with diligence & discipline in order to learn the Word. In the process we must be taught of God. But we must also spend time & effort learning it (15, 16, 18, 27, 33, 34, 73, 78, 102, 108). With the busy lives we all lead, it takes discipline. We must make it a priority to learn the Word.

2. We must obey God's Word Knowledge without obedience leads to spiritual pride & legalism. Stuart Briscoe reportedly once asked an audience, *What do you do with the commandments in Scripture?* A little old lady raised her hand & said, *I underline them in blue!* God's Word wasn't given to fill our notebooks, but to correct our sin. This is a dominant theme in the psalm.

3. We must love God's Word Love is the motive for obedience. We're to love God's Word because it reveals the God of love to us. His loving commandments are for our good (47, 48, 97, 113, 119, 127, 140, 159, 163, 165, 167). If you've lost your love for God's Word, you need to repent & recover your first love (Rev 2:5).

Are you a person of the Word? Is it your passion & desire? If not, you're spiritually malnourished & starving. Ask God to revive you through His Word. He longs to do that in & for you.