

Daleth
Psalm 119:25-32
ABC 5/27/18

If you have your Bibles, open them with me to Ps 119. We're going to be looking at the 4th section of this alphabetical psalm as we work our way through the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. As we've seen, each of the stanzas of each section begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Today it's Daleth. Vss 25-32 teach us much about the Christian life. As I've said before & will keep saying, the entire Bible, Old & NTs, are God's Word to us. From beginning to end it's the story of redemption through Jesus Christ alone. Christians who say we don't need the OT don't know their Bible. But this is becoming much more common. For example, recently (5/9/18) Andy Stanley said this: *1st century church leaders unhitched the church from the worldview, value system, & regulations of the Jewish scriptures. Peter, James, & Paul elected to unhitch the Christian faith from their Jewish scriptures, & my friends, we must as well.*¹ What he means by that, I don't fully know. But I do find it troubling. After all, Jesus Himself said, **the Scripture cannot be broken** (Jn 10:35) & that the Scriptures bear witness to Him (Jn 5:39). He also said, **For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?** (Jn 5:46-47). Jesus is emphatically denying that He can be *unhitched* from the message of the OT. Lk 24:27 tells us that Jesus **beginning with Moses & with all the prophets ... explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.** & Paul clearly tells us, **All Scripture is inspired by God & profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness** (2 Tim 3:16). All this to say that we need the OT & it has much to teach us. We see that again in our text this morning. As we look at this passage, the psalmist is in trouble again. Look at the very 1st line: **My soul cleaves to the dust.** The psalmist is going through something that isn't enjoyable. & then in vs 28 he says, **My soul weeps because of grief.** The psalmist is experiencing difficult days. He's burdened & sorrowful & grieving. He's not sure whether he can go on. What does he do in that situation? He lifts up his soul to God. I love what William Plumer says about this passage. *Whatever we do, or whatever our state may be, let*

¹ www.christianpost.com/news/christians-must-unhitch-old-testament-from-their-faith-says-andy-stanley-223818/

*us deal candidly with God & declare to Him our whole case.*² So the psalmist says, *Lord, my soul is clinging to the dust. I feel like I'm almost dead. My soul is melting away.* He lays it all out before God & says exactly what's going on in his own heart. He does this, not because God needs to be informed, but because he must be honest before the Lord. Plumer goes on to say,

*If we are sad, the Lord can cheer us. If we are in the dark, the Lord can give us light. If we have no strength, He can strengthen us. If our wants are many, He can supply them. If we are shut up & cannot come forth, He can enlarge us. Whatever is our case, let us state it all ... before the Lord.*³

That's what the psalmist is doing here. He's opening up his heart, he's spreading it out before the Lord & saying, *Lord, I'm clinging to the dust. My soul is dissolving. Help me.* In doing this, he teaches us important things about the Christian life. Before we get into it, let's read it & then pray. This is God's Word to us this morning: **119:25-32** PRAY

1. Requests The psalmist asks God for several things, each of which acknowledges his dependence on God & His grace.

A. Revive Me 25

This is something the psalmist knows he can't do for himself. He looks to the Lord in this tough time of life & cries out to God to give him life. Have you ever been there? You were at the point you wanted to die? You were ready for it to be over & you couldn't go on? So you call out to God, **revive me!** & the One who raised you from the dead of sin to the life of righteousness, the One who caused you to be born again, the One who called you out of darkness & into His marvelous light, the One who raised you to newness of life, the One who gave you the new birth can & will answer that prayer when you're crying out to Him now in the midst of your suffering. **Revive me.** If He could give you new life then He can certainly revive your life now. The psalmist is crying out, *Lord, my soul is clinging, adhering to the dust!* He's crying out to God as he lies face down on the ground. He's sunk to the dust under the crushing weight of trouble & grief. Adam was created out of the dust of the earth & dust is often associated in the OT with Sheol, the place of the dead. The point is that our God can bring life from death! He does it when He saves us. We

² *Studies in the Book of Psalms*, p 1034

³ *Ibid*, p 1034

don't save ourselves because we are dead in our trespasses & sins but He gives us new life & the God who gives us new life can revive us in the midst of our tough times when our souls are clinging to the dust. & so the psalmist just asks, **Revive me!** If God has raised us from the death of sin through Jesus Christ we know He can renew life to us now no matter how close we think we are to the end. But the psalmist doesn't stop there. He says, **revive me according to Your word.** We see it again in vs 28. **Strengthen me according to Your word.** The psalmist asked for life & vitality to be restored & he asked that it happen **according to Your word.** This shows that revival comes from a sense of spiritual need & lowliness. True revival, in the biblical sense, is marked by an awareness of sin & an urgency to confess & make things right (mentioned in vs 26). **Revive me according to Your word.** What does that mean? In His Word, God makes promises to us as His children. One of the promises He makes is that we are in His hand & are under His protection & nothing can touch us apart from His will (Jn 10:28-29). Knowing that truth is absolutely essential to believe when you're crying out, *Lord, my soul cleaves to the dust.* To affirm that the life of the faithful is in God's hand & under His protection is crucial to your revival & being strengthened. When we lift up this petition, **revive me**, we must reckon with the promises of God's Word. I love what Calvin says about this. *Apart from His Word, God's power would afford us little comfort.*⁴ Therefore, when our soul clings to the dust & we cry out, **revive me**, we do so according to the promises of His Word & we may expect blessing. There's the 1st petition, **revive me.**

B. Teach Me 26

Two words God loves to hear from us are these: **Teach me** (Mt 7:7-11). This is the same request made in in vs 12. The written Word of God & the activity of the Spirit of God go together. The Spirit speaks through the Word that He inspired. If we desire to grow in grace, we need both to study the Bible & also ask God through His Holy Spirit to be our teacher.

C. Make Me 27

He wants God to cause him to understand **the way of God's precepts.** He longs to not just know, but to understand, God's Word to such an extent that it transforms his whole life, inwardly &

⁴ *Commentaries On The Psalms 93 – 119*, electronic edition

outwardly. He wants a deep understanding, one that goes beyond a mere understanding of the words to a profound understanding of what they reveal about the nature of God, the gospel, & God's ways. How often do we pray this? Should we? Absolutely!

D. Strengthen Me 28

Again this is a word-picture of great anguish. It's as if his soul is melting away in the shedding of his tears. From his perspective, he's dissolving in grief. There's nothing wrong with feeling down in itself. It's a natural response to the kind of trials the psalmist has been describing. What is wrong is allowing such feelings to turn us inward, or even worse, away from God. In this condition, there's only one antidote & that is God Himself who strengthens us. This melting heaviness doesn't accomplish anything in us unless it brings us to the throne of grace where we cry out to God to give us the strength to carry on. The psalmist is so dejected & discouraged, he feels as if his soul is melting away in sorrow. Have you ever felt like that? The tears just won't stop & you feel like a puddle? Remember the story of Elijah in 1 Kgs 19? Elijah wanted a nationwide revival where Baal was rejected & the true God of Israel was worshiped. But even after his great contest with the false prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel & even after their defeat, Elijah faced a time of despair. After he routs the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel he outruns a chariot back to Jezreel. Jezreel was the capital of the northern kingdom at that time. It seems that Elijah thought that because of the miraculous deliverance God had given, not only in the defeat of the prophets of Baal with fire from heaven consuming the altar & the prophets of Baal being slaughtered & the rain coming because of his prayer, that he expected there to be a response all over the nation of people turning back to God. He went to the capital to wait for that to happen. It would be like us praying & praying & praying for a nationwide revival to breakout in our country & going to Washington so we could be there when it happened. But when he gets to Jezreel he's met by a messenger with a message from Jezebel saying, *You're going to be dead this time tomorrow* (19:2). This plunges him into discouragement. His soul is so filled with sorrow that it almost melts away. & Elijah begins to run. In vs 3-8 we read,

he was afraid & arose & ran for his life & came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, & left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, & came & sat down under a

juniper tree; & he requested for himself that he might die, & said, "It is enough; now, O LORD, take my life, for I am not better than my fathers." He lay down & slept under a juniper tree; & behold, there was an angel touching him, & he said to him, "Arise, eat." Then he looked & behold, there was at his head a bread cake baked on hot stones, & a jar of water. So he ate & drank & lay down again. The angel of the LORD came again a second time & touched him & said, "Arise, eat, because the journey is too great for you." So he arose & ate & drank, & went in the strength of that food forty days & forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God.

Isn't that an amazing picture? He's in the wilderness & he doesn't have anything left in him. He lies down under a tree in the wilderness & wants to die. He doesn't have any provisions, he's left his servant behind & he wants to die in the wilderness. What does the Lord do? The Lord sends him an angel to cook him a hot breakfast & wakes him up & says, *Elijah, eat. & here's some refreshing water to go along with the bread.* But he's still weak & he goes right back to sleep again. The angel of the Lord wakes him up a 2nd time & he gets a 2nd breakfast. That's a picture of the answer to the psalmist's prayer. **My soul weeps because of grief; strengthen me according to Your word.** The psalmist doesn't have anything to offer here & Elijah didn't have anything to offer there. But the Lord had something to offer to Elijah & to the psalmist & He strengthened them. When you cry that desperate prayer out to God, **Lord, strengthen me**, remember how God strengthened Elijah when he had nothing left in him. Again, this strengthening is **according to God's Word**. David found it in his own case: **On the day I called, You answered me; You made me bold with strength in my soul** (Ps 138:3). Paul was given the promise: **My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness** (1 Cor 12:9). Is not the God of Israel the one who **Himself gives strength & power to the people** (Ps 68:35)? He is the faithful God, **who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it** (1 Cor 10:13). When we are most aware of our utter helplessness & most reliant on God's strength, it is then that the **soul that weeps because of grief** is strengthened. Revive me, teach me, make me, strengthen me, & now ...

E. Remove From Me 29

The psalmist wanted God to make him by-pass the way of lying or deceit, the way of falsehood which leads away from God instead of to God. He's asking his Master to bring about a severance of anything & everything profane from his character & conduct. The LXX puts it this way:

Separate away from me the unrighteous way! This is to be kept from sin. How is it accomplished? By the grace of God. More specifically, it's by the grace of God exercising itself through His written Word. Vs 29 makes this point with the thought that if we're to be kept from sin, it must be by the grace of God through the teaching of His Word. **119:9**

Again, this is a request we probably don't make often enough. It would be a great daily morning prayer for all of us.

F. Grant Me 29

The psalmist longs for God to overwhelm him with His law. The Law, God's instructions, isn't our accuser. Instead, it reveals to us God & His holiness. The psalmist counts it a grace for God to teach him these things. **Graciously teach** is a single word in Hebrew. It carries the thought of granting knowledge of the law & the grace of living by it. God's law is a good gift. If we're to be kept from sin, it must be by the grace of God exercised through the teaching of His Word. We're in the right state of mind when we can look upon God's teaching as a gift of grace. The author wishes to have the law opened up to his understanding, engraved upon his heart, & carried out in his life. This is what he seeks for from God & pleads for it as a gracious gift. As Spurgeon said, *If the law be not in our hearts the lie will enter.*⁵ The only way to expel the lie is to accept the truth of God & His Word. The implication of this request is that God, the Master Teacher, not only graciously illumines His Word for our direction in life but also mercifully give the needed resources to be able to conform to it. *Grant me Your law graciously that I might conform to its directions.*

G. Shame Me Not 31

Based on his own circumstances & confession he pleads for God not to shame him. This aversion to shame has been & will continue to be seen throughout this psalm (6, 31, 46, 80, 116). Shame is the result of wandering from the faithful path. The only way to escape shame is by making God & His Word the priority of our lives. The psalmist understood that if he were to give himself entirely to God to cling to His word as a shipwrecked man clings to a floating plank in the sea,

⁵ http://www.gospelweb.net/SpurgeonGoldenAlphabet/FS_GoldenAlphabet.htm

then he could trust that God wouldn't allow him to be put to shame. This was well-placed confidence.

H. Enlarge Me 32

Again, this isn't something he can do to himself; only God can enlarge his heart. By saying, **enlarge my heart**, he's acknowledging that he can't do anything without God's divine assistance. This also seems to carry with it the concept of liberty. When his heart is set free from the constraint of trouble & anxiety, the psalmist will use his liberty for more energetic service. 2 elements of this freedom are the breaking of sin's dominion over us as our steps are steadied by God's Word (133) & the mind-stretching encounter with a greater wisdom & vision than one's own. As Christians we long to live a life that is pleasing to God but this can only be done as we humbly rely on the presence of the Holy Spirit within us. That's what this petition is getting at. An enlarged heart is a soul that has been strengthened through the steady intake of God's Word. The psalmist knows the greatness of God & His Word & his own weakness & dependence upon God. He must have his heart enlarged, that is, made bigger & stronger & better & more steadfast. His confidence is that God will do this through His Word. William Plumer says,

*If we make any good speed (in the Christian life), it is by receiving strength from above. But if the Lord appear & enlarge our hearts, we will have strength for every duty, & delight in every sacrifice. Enlightened, evangelical, holy obedience can only spring from the operation of divine grace on the heart. We never begin to act for God, till He begins to work in us all His holy will, & the work of faith with power. Fruitful only in sin, the tree of our corrupt hearts must be made good ere its fruit can be good.*⁶

All of our fruit comes from His work in us. All 8 of these petitions show us that the way of godliness is the way of dependence upon God's grace & power found through His Word.

2. Resolutions If we truly want to walk in the way of godliness, here are the resolutions the psalmist makes that we should make as well. The way of godliness involves our response & our resolve. The way of godliness isn't just about God's grace & power but also about our response. Some would say, *God helps those who help themselves*. A majority of Americans believe this is a biblical phrase. Even those who know it isn't found in the Bible usually attribute it to Benjamin Franklin. But Franklin wasn't the originator of it. It most likely comes from the Puritan, Matthew

⁶ *Studies in the Book of Psalms*, p 1035

Henry. Henry's commentary on Joshua 5:13-15 reads, *God will help those who help themselves.*⁷ But the way he intended this phrase is NOT the way most people use it today. Our culture thinks that God will work out everything for those who try hard. If we do our best God will do the rest. But that's not true. So what did Henry mean when he said, *God will help those who help themselves?* He points out that just before the city of Jericho was conquered, Joshua was **by Jericho**. It was here that Joshua met the Commander of the Lord's Army. Joshua was in Jericho *by faith & hope, though he had not begun to lay siege to the city. He was in it in thought & expectation.* Joshua went through the front line & up to the enemy city to pray, plan, & prepare. Without fear Joshua stood by Jericho knowing that soon those walls would fall & the city would be taken. *There he was meditating & praying; & to those who are so employed God often graciously manifest Himself.* Joshua was there because the Lord had promised victory. He was sure of that victory. He had no fear. He knew what God was going to do. & yet, he went up to the city to prepare, because Joshua also knew that God uses means. God executes His will through means, & sometimes we are those means. God uses us as His instruments to bring about His will in this world. & when He does, God will help us accomplish those ends. God will graciously manifest Himself to us as we seek to see His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. God will help us as we do what He's called us to do. Do the things God has called you to do & God will help you in those works. God helps those who help themselves in that sense. It's not *let go & let God*. No, it takes effort & determination & resolve on our part too, but even that is empowered by the Holy Spirit within us.

A. Told 26

The idea here is that he told God everything about himself & his life. He confessed fully & freely before God. Such a declaration proves he knew his own condition & wasn't blinded by pride. Our confessions aren't meant to make God know our sins, but to make us know them! The psalmist reminisces about a time when he had made known his ways & the Lord had graciously responded. Based on this personal precedent from his past reliance on God, he issues forth a

⁷ *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, p 298

specific request for God's instruction. Isn't it a relief to confess your sins to a gracious & loving Father knowing He will forgive? This showing ourselves to God, declaring our sinful ways before Him, without hypocrisy or deceit, is the way of growth & rest in the Christian life.

B. Meditate 27

I will... That's resolve. *This is what I'm going to do.* The psalmist understood he needed more than knowledge. He also needed understanding. With both he would meditate on God's wonderful works. The more we know of God's doings the more we admire them. **I will meditate on your wonders.** Do we do this? Do we make the time to think about all the wonders of God as He's worked in history & in our own lives? We certainly should!

C. Chosen 30

Only 2 paths lie before us for our choice, the way of lying & the way of truth. God, by the truth of His Word, guides us into one & Satan, by his temptations, draws us into the other. The way of lying is the natural choice of man. The choice of the way of truth is the Lord's work in the hearts of His people. His teaching shows us the way & His grace enables us to choose it. The desire to have the way of lying removed from us is a clear evidence that we've already chosen the way of truth. Each of us must choose one or the other. There is no neutrality. No one stumbles onto the right way by chance, they must choose it. & they must continue to choose it or they'll soon wander from it. This isn't a once & done. We must continually, moment-by-moment, choose God's way. One of our responses to God's work in us is to choose God & His Word. Have you ever had a choice & you knew which one was right & yet you chose the other? Makes me think of the rich young ruler whom Jesus looked at & set before him the way of life & the rich young ruler rejected it & went away sorrowing because he loved his money (Mk 10:17-27). In contrast to that, look at Heb 11:24-25. When the psalmist says, **I have chosen the faithful way**, what's he talking about? Heb 11 says, **by faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin.** There it is. Our response to God's grace requires us to choose this day whom we will serve (Josh 24:15). Do we choose God & His Word or the fleeting pleasures of

sin on a daily basis? The psalmist has a settled attitude. He's made a decision to set his eyes on God's Word.

D. Placed 30

The psalmist fully agrees with God's rules. He is submissive to his Master. We can't fully understand the Scripture unless we make a basic commitment saying, *Whatever I find in Your Word, I will do*. If it's good to hide God's Word in our heart as a safeguard against sin, it's also good to lay it before our eyes as the chart to guide our course, the model to direct our work, & the support to strengthen our weaknesses. In times of distress there's nothing to cling to but God & His testimonies.

E. Cling Vs 31 says, **I cling to your testimonies**. How did this section begin? **My soul cleaves to the dust**. **Cleaves & cling** are the same word. The psalmist is resolving, **I cling to Your testimonies**. *I am hanging on for dear life to Your Word, Lord. My soul was clinging to the dust but now I'm clinging to Your Word*. In Scripture, clinging to God is usually associated with obeying His voice (Dt 30:20), serving Him (Dt 10:20; 13:4), & walking in His ways (Dt 11:22). To cling may also suggest oneness. Just as a man **cleaves to his wife & they become one flesh** (Gen 2:24) so the will of the psalmist becomes one with that of God. God has appointed that a man will leave his father & mother & **cleave** or **cling** to his wife, meaning he'll remain faithful to her & be utterly loyal to her. Acts 11 is an interesting passage where people have come to faith & are now believers. The church in Jerusalem finds out about them & they send Barnabas to encourage them. Acts 11:23 says, **when he arrived & witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced & began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord**. He exhorted them to remain faithful, to cling tight, to hold fast to the Lord. In fact, the KJV translates this vs like this: **when he came, & had seen the grace of God, was glad, & exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord**. The psalmist says, *I'm clinging to Your Testimonies*. He's chosen to walk in the way of the Lord not in the way of the fleeting pleasures of this life. To do so he must cling to God & His Word.

F. Run 32

In the beginning of this section he's clinging to the dust (25). By the end he's clinging to God's Word. In the beginning he's laid low. Now he's joyfully running with all his strength in the race God's Word sets before him. He's moved in a beautiful progression from confessing to choosing to clinging to running. Whatever progress we've made in the Christian life, we should always desire to make more. How shall we run? Not in our own strength but by the good hand of God upon us, delivering & enlarging our hearts. Paul uses running a picture of the Christian life. In Phil 3:12-14 Paul speaks of this running, this pressing on that the psalmist is speaking of.

Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind & reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul is living out what the psalmist is resolving,

I will run in the way of God & His Word. I am pressing on towards the prize. That's what I'm aiming for. I've chosen the Lord, not the fleeting pleasures of sin. I'm clinging to His Word. I'm not doing it my way. I'm hanging on to His Word & pressing on. I'm running the way of God's commandments & my aim is the goal of the upward call.

That's the response & the resolution of the believer to God's grace & power in the way of godliness. Heb 12:1 urges, **let us also lay aside every encumbrance & the sin which so easily entangles us, & let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.** Likewise, Paul declared, **I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; & not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing (2 Tim 4:7-8).** Our path in life isn't automatic. We must choose the right path (30), cling to the right word (31), & run vigorously on God's path (32). What a change from vs 25 to vs 32. From cleaving to the dust to running in the way. This psalm, in the midst of our trouble & our sorrow, teaches us the way of godliness. We are utterly dependent upon God's grace & power at work in us which calls for a response & a resolve on our part. May God grant that we would respond as the psalmist did.